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# BEHIND THE SMILE IN REAL JAPAN

*By*  
E. K. VENABLES

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM  
PHOTOGRAPHS



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## PREFACE

JAPAN is a country about which a great deal is heard but very little is known. The Japanese themselves often complain that they are misunderstood by the rest of the world, and this is quite true, though not in the way they mean it. They are suffering from what may be called an over-romanticized reputation, partly thrust upon them, but mostly self-inflicted. Whenever they fail to live up to it they are severely criticized. People in Western countries, brought up to think of the Japanese as a blend of old-world charm and modern progressiveness, are naturally puzzled, for instance, by the scant courtesy with which these islanders treat their Chinese neighbours, or the methods which they employ in competing for world markets. It will be worth while to shed imaginary notions and to look at the Japanese as they really are, the product of their circumstances and history.

The Japanese are by no means the only nation about whom ignorance is widespread. In spite of so much that goes by the name of news and information, the peoples of the world know very little about each other. Press, radio, and cinema unite in giving the impression that life anywhere consists of little else but diplomatic speeches, martial parades, awful disasters, and picturesque festivals.

Hardly less superficial and unreliable are the impressions gathered and passed on by travellers, either amateur or professional, who pay a short visit to one or two big cities and then write all about the whole country. Such fleeting visitors see only what they want to see, usually measuring

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up everything with a home-made yardstick, and ignoring anything that does not fit in with their ideas of what ought to be. Others seek their information in high places, direct from the powers that be (generally by the devious means of interpreters), and go away proud and happy, having seen and heard just what their charming official hosts mean them to see and hear—and tell the world. Meanwhile there is grinning or gnashing of teeth among any of the visitors' fellow-countrymen who happen to be in that foreign land, not as transient tourists but as hardened old residents.

Even among those who live for years in a foreign country there are varying degrees of interest and knowledge. There are the old stagers who boast of having minded their own business, never bothering to look outside their own little national community of fellow-exiles, and knowing practically nothing of the land, its people, or even its language. Others, employed by some organization from their home country, have been able to study local conditions and developments from a rather detached point of view. But the observer who gets the real inside view of people's life and character is he who works among them as one of themselves, employed by them and responsible to them. If, moreover, he has previously seen other countries from this point of view he will be all the more in a position to make accurate observations and draw rational conclusions.

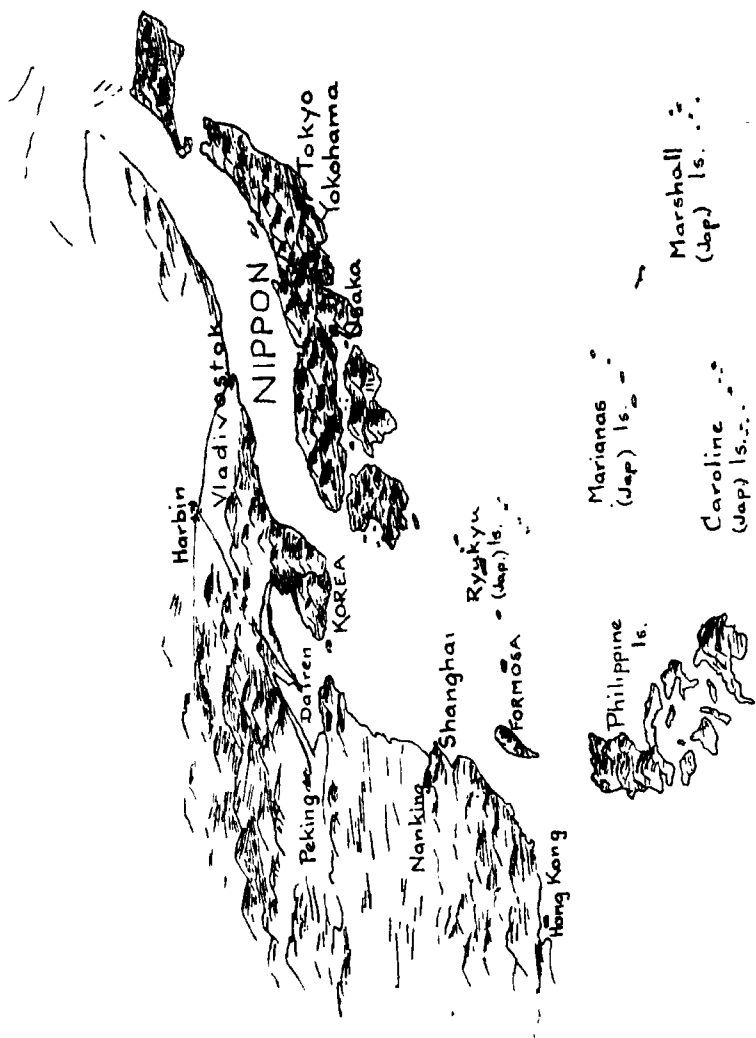
To get a clear idea of Japan and her people we must keep in mind that we are dealing with an Oriental nation which up to a short time ago cut itself off from the rest of the world. Since the great change during the second half of last century, when this policy of isolation was abandoned for the wholesale imitation of foreign ideas and methods, Japan has been striving to catch up with Western nations

## *Preface*

on their own ground—a hectic pursuit which is likely to continue, as these other nations are not inclined to stand still and wait. Many of Japan's troubles can be traced to the feverish haste with which the nation seeks to show itself progressive.

To appreciate the remarkable progress which Japan has made on the path she has chosen it is only fair to make a comparison between conditions in Japan and those in other Asiatic countries, though the Japanese themselves are the first to claim their equality with Western Powers, or, rather, superiority to them. There is no reason to suppose that Japan will ever be entirely Westernized; it is likely to remain an extraordinary mixture of ancient and modern. What changes have taken place are mostly superficial; at heart the Japanese remain more or less the same as in the old feudal days, suspicious and antagonistic towards everything and everybody foreign. Even among themselves, as a relic of those days when everybody must be regarded as a potential enemy or traitor, they have their ever-ready and everlasting formal smile, a screen and guard.

E. K. V.



SCHEMATIC VIEW OF JAPAN AND NEIGHBOURING TERRITORIES, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

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## CHAPTER I

### *Out East*

#### I. FAR EASTWARD

THE Japanese smile dawned on us even before we sailed for the East. We were staying in England, after some years spent in various countries abroad, and now we were getting ready to take up an appointment at a Government college in Japan. A friend already out there had given a note of introduction to a Japanese colleague then visiting London. Mr Asama asked us to go and see him. He was out at the time arranged, so we waited in the sitting-room till he came in.

Having already lived so much among people in different countries, we felt accustomed to foreign ways. We fondly imagined that we were acquainted with all possible perversions of the long-suffering English language—but here was something new. A little brown man sidled into the room, his face deeply creased in a persistent smile. He bowed stiffly and repeatedly from the waist, rather like a drill-instructor doing trunk-forward-bend, but with the addition of strange hissing sounds as he returned to the vertical. He seemed unwilling to disengage himself from the door, and remained clutching the knob of it and peeping round the edge of it, looking upward from a height of five feet or so, and never relaxing the smile.

Further strange sounds issued from Mr Asama's lips. For a moment we thought he was giving us our first lesson in Japanese, but soon, by means of strenuous mental effort

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and lucky intuition, we realized that this was an attempt at English—or on it. We responded, using that careful and deliberate enunciation we keep for such international emergencies. Gradually, however, we discovered a certain lack of cohesion between the two sides of the conversation. When we mentioned our friends in Tokyo Mr Asama replied that he had been twice to the British Museum. And we had murmured some tactful reply to what we thought was his scathing comment on the ugly English climate before it flashed upon us that he had meant to say how agreeable he found everything and everybody.

Mr Asama was one of the many Japanese sent abroad by their Government to see what they can find in science, medicine, economics, languages, or other branches of the world's knowledge. With guide-book and notebook he was conscientiously doing the round of famous places, in a determined effort to capture the essence of English life. In the interval till our own sailing date for the East we took him about as much as possible, introducing him to friends, helping him to meet ordinary folk at work, at home, at play. He asked us millions of questions, made copious notes in his books, and showed marked progress in speaking and understanding English.

Like most other Japanese abroad, however, he afterwards gravitated to a community where he met only his own countrymen and heard nothing but his own language. As a result he eventually returned home with a limited ability to use English, but with a boundless contempt and aversion towards the inferior Western races and the usual firm conviction of the Japanese that they have absolutely nothing to learn from anybody. We afterwards heard of him as rabidly national and strongly anti-foreign, but by that time

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we were in a position to understand even this remarkable phenomenon in the returned Japanese traveller. By then we had seen enough of the East to be no longer surprised at anything.

From the first we were almost painfully scrupulous in keeping an open mind, so desirable when embarking on a new venture. We were as wary of preconceived notions as we were chary of forming conclusions. For all that, our early impressions were typical of later experience, and not only our own, but that of Westerners in general out there, especially those who had been longest in the country and knew its people best.

Even though previously acquainted with other parts of the Orient, we found a most useful approach to the Far East in the Suez route. Later on we realized that in this respect European travellers have a distinct advantage over those from America. To mere tourists it does not matter, as everything is a thrill to them and they soon get over it; but to Americans who are going to live out there, especially to so many young missionaries, it is a shock to be carried in a few days from the accustomed surroundings of their home town to a country which might almost be in another world. We have often thought that it would be worth while for them to travel round by Suez, as a gradual introduction to the very strange conditions under which they are going to live.

This six weeks' voyage, through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, then on to Colombo, Singapore, and Hong Kong, is one of the most interesting and picturesque trips in the world. We land at Gibraltar, with its little town cramped at the foot of the towering Rock. At Marseilles,

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with its age-old memories of sea-borne trade, we are unmistakably in the sunny, drowsy atmosphere of Southern France. At Naples we revisit old Pompeii, and catch a glimpse of more modern history in the local *Fascisti* on parade.

Crossing to Port Said, we have left Europe behind, and feel ourselves at the gateway of the East. The statue of de Lesseps stands pointing along the highway that he made. On we go, through the sweltering Canal and the Red Sea, the roughness of the Indian Ocean, after which we appreciate the soft bright green of palms and tropical growth in Ceylon. At Singapore, with its mixture of many races, we are on the threshold of the Far East. By the time we reach Hong Kong and Shanghai we feel ourselves very much on the far side of the world.

Fellow-passengers on board are often as interesting as the places seen on the way. At first there may be a number of English people doing a Mediterranean trip, enthusiastically trying to become well bronzed, but getting painfully skinned by this sudden exposure to southern sunshine. These tourists land at one of the early ports, and their places are taken by long-distance voyagers who have cut out the first part by travelling across the Continent, from Germany, England, or elsewhere. We still have some good friends whom we first met on this trip *via* Suez, and with whom we have kept in touch, whether near or far.

One meets engineers going to construct railways, bridges, tunnels and things in all sorts of unlikely places. Merchants and others who have grown old and grizzled while bearing the white man's burden bemoan the passing of the good old days, when profits were made and measures were taken and no questions asked. Missionaries from far inland

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China, who have had their houses burned almost over their heads, who have seen the country ravaged by bandits and have barely escaped with their lives, are going back with a sublimely optimistic faith in the great future of China. Old Jock, as every one calls him, even when his name proves to be Henry Brown, is going out to take charge of a Chinese-owned boat in the opium trade, and he is only wishing that he had some capital to put into it. On the other hand, there are British officials, employed by the Chinese Customs Department, with stories of *contraband* and fantastic adventures in the course of daily duty. No seaway but Suez could tell such a tale of the bizarre, of the grim and the picturesque so curiously mixed together.

Both on our first trip and later on when returning from furlough we travelled on Japanese steamers, typical of their mercantile marine, a large part of which is made up of old ships, many of them bought from European firms who have discarded them. Two new motor-ships, however, were put on the Suez run in 1932. The three sister-ships which have now been running for several years on the Pacific route represent the maximum attained in Japanese mercantile shipbuilding—17,000 tons.

In most of the Japanese boats on the Suez route the passenger accommodation is limited, and on such a long run a certain amount of monotony in meals is unavoidable; but the service is very good, the little stewards showing their natural genius in looking after the convenience and comfort of passengers. There is something particularly fitting in the name *boy-san* for these diminutive fellows, though one soon finds that size is no indication of age, and the person who looks a boy of eighteen may be a married man with a grown-up family of his own.

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On board we had several curious examples of the ways of Japanese technicians—incidents still better understood in the light of later experience. My first interview with a Nipponese doctor was brought about by a small splinter, invisible to the naked eye, embedded in one of my fingers. The ship's surgeon received me with the greatest courtesy and professional ceremony. My name, age, origin, occupation, destination, and other details were carefully recorded in a large book. I was asked to lie down on a couch, while an assistant painted iodine all over my hand. My apologies for the trouble I was causing were gently waved aside. From the tray of gleaming instruments at his elbow the doctor selected a powerful magnifying-glass, through which he studied the end of the finger long and earnestly, at last assuring me that there was nothing to be found. Next day I dug out the offending bit of timber with the point of my knife.

Down one corridor close to the cabins there was a steam-pipe whose valve could not be shut at any time or by any means. The extra warmth was bad enough in the Mediterranean, but in the swelter of the Red Sea and the tropics the passengers' appeals and complaints became louder and more insistent. From stewards, chief steward, and purser the matter went on up to the chief engineer, but each time the only result was a lengthy consultation and the inevitable repetition of "*Shikata ga nai!*"<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the steam-heat kept on.

On each trip we had opportunities for seeing a bit of Eastern history repeating itself, though in slightly different ways. The first time we touched at Hong Kong, the farthest of the British outposts strung along this important

<sup>1</sup> "It can't be helped!"

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highway, the Chinese were having one of their periodical waves of righteous indignation against foreign exploitation in general and England in particular. The whole place was paralysed by a strike; even the coolies and domestic servants had obeyed the general orders to make things uncomfortable for the hateful aliens. Merchant princes had to fetch their own drinks; up in the pleasant residential quarter at the lofty Peak white people had the strange experience of having to put away their own nets and rackets after tennis. In the business quarters of Victoria and Kowloon khaki Tommies, white-clad sailors, and swarthy Sikhs were patrolling on behalf of law and order. On the way to Shanghai we passed an extraordinary number of ships coming south after being held up by the strike. Things were still very unsettled, so our thoughtful Japanese captain, true to the Oriental custom of talking roundabout instead of making a direct statement, put up notices urging passengers not to go ashore at Shanghai, owing to a reported outbreak of cholera.

Another time we called at Chinese ports the Tommies, sailors, and Sikhs were again on special patrol, this time to protect the Japanese against the fury of their Chinese neighbours, who were just then highly incensed by events in Manchuria. At Hong Kong the Chinese passengers abandoned our ship for an American liner calling at Shanghai. On the other hand, several Japanese passengers joined her, dressed in Chinese costume for greater safety in port, though they in turn were extremely insulted if ever spoken to or referred to as Chinese.

On any eastward voyage most of the European passengers have landed by the time we leave Shanghai, and for the rest of the trip there is a big majority of Japanese



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on board, very pleased at being among their own people and on the way back to their homeland, for they are the most nostalgic people in the world. Those who have come all the way from Europe have occupied tables to themselves, and have generally formed a pretty close circle, as they do anywhere, partly because of their natural feeling of aloofness and superiority, partly owing to the uneasiness they arouse in other people, through their inability to mix freely and easily, or even to make themselves decently intelligible in any foreign language.

Japanese travellers show a marked fondness for expensive cameras, field-glasses, and other optical equipment, with which they festoon themselves when going ashore at a port of call, or even when in mid-ocean, where there is nothing particular to see. As their own country produces none of these desirable articles they take the opportunity of laying in a stock of them while abroad, and especially in Germany. Back home in Japan they proudly display these hall-marks of national advancement and authoritative outlook upon the world. It is also most noticeable that at places like Gibraltar and Singapore it is the Japanese passengers who are busiest with field-glasses and cameras—an unconsciously funny contrast to the conduct required by their own national regulations. From the moment of embarking on a Japanese steamer at any port in the world one is confronted by charts, by proclamations and other solemn warnings against the grievous crime of photographing, sketching, or otherwise comporting oneself in an unseemly manner in any of the numerous 'strategic zones' round the islands of Japan.

We reach one of these at Moji, the busy little port at the entrance of the Inland Sea, a long, narrow stretch of water

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separating the south islands of Kyushu and Shikoku from the main island of Honshu, Hondo, or Nippon, as it is variously called. At Moji the first of many squads of officials boards the ship. They are important-looking little men in uniform—a type we shall see a good deal of in any part of the country. Passport and customs examinations, as everywhere else in the world, vary according to the official mood of the moment; they may be a mere formality or they may be tediously detailed. Occasionally the order goes forth for all incoming books to be carefully scrutinized, in order that the nation may be protected from what is known as ‘dangerous thought.’ How such control can be exercised by inspectors without the slightest knowledge of any foreign language has never been rightly explained.

As this, then, is a strategic zone, the naked eye is the only means allowed for a view of the surroundings—the tide swirling in or out of the narrow entrance, the greyish roofs of the town, or the pine-clad hills beyond. We have never heard any objection raised against the wearing of spectacles, or even a monocle, but the Japanese passengers too must remember that just here their treasured cameras and field-glasses are taboo. They are no longer among easygoing foreign authorities; they are back in their own native land, where the powers that be not only call a spy a spy, but regularly affix the label to the most harmless people, in order to show how national prestige and integrity are being carefully maintained.

And so, weighing anchor, our pilot picks his way through the winding channels, past steam- and sailing-craft of every size and kind, and makes along the Inland Sea for Kobe, where we shall land. Sometimes we are well within sight of the south island of Shikoku; more often we are so close

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to the shore of the main island that we can sometimes make out woods and villages. The smooth water is dotted with countless islands, which add to the fame of the Inland Sea as a national beauty spot. Medieval-looking sailing-ships with the peculiar square-cut rig drift lazily by. Hard-working little tramp steamers chug past us on the way from Osaka or Nagoya to other harbours great and small, just along the coast or the other side of the world.

Landing at a seaport is much the same sort of thing in most parts of the world. We make our way past warehouses, goods sidings, and through the general bustle of transport and transshipment. For passing visitors, especially the more fanatical seekers after the romantic and picturesque, this commonplace appearance is a sore trial. Whether at Kobe or at Yokohama, there is little of Oriental glamour in the town behind the prosaic harbour. It is true that the quaint old Sino-Japanese writing catches the eye everywhere, from the banner-like advertisements, shop-names, and other announcements. The faces of the people are unmistakably different from anything seen before. At least in the smarter streets, the men are mostly in Western-style suits, but the women are, almost without exception, still wearing the old-fashioned *kimono* and sash-like *obi*. On all sides we see and hear the shuffling, clattering wooden sandals (*geta*) peculiar to this country; but, no matter how long we stay here, we shall never get quite used to them.

In the business centres of these big cities streets and buildings might almost be those of any Western port. It is noticeable, however, that the greatest blocks of offices are not more than a few stories high. Even with construction of steel and concrete, resistance to earthquake is

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none too sure. In the older buildings of Yokohama there was a great deal of brickwork, which crumbled disastrously in the earthquake of 1923. Hotels, warehouses, and other structures came crashing down upon their occupants. Concrete lift-shafts, steel safes, and other solid portions remained standing as sorry monuments among the ruins. For years it was a place of heaped-up rubbish, vacant spaces, and wooden huts in which business was carried on. In the process of reconstruction there was a certain amount of street-widening and -straightening; a great deal of money was devoted to the laying-out of gardens and promenades, giving Yokohama one of the most attractive waterfronts in the world, unchanged though the less conspicuous quarters of the town remained. Tokyo was rebuilt more or less as it had been before; it is only in the main streets that one sees any approach to the clear-cut lines and rectangular masses of Westernized architecture.

In the chief thoroughfares of these big towns trams clang and rattle to and fro. Taxis and motor-trucks have largely displaced the old rickshas and handcarts drawn by men. At first it might be difficult to reconcile the enormous number of smart-looking motor-cars with the oft-told tale of Spartan simplicity and low standard of living in Japan. They soon reveal to us two enlightening facts in the national economy. Most of these vehicles are either imported or built at works owned by foreign firms within the country, for the Japanese have not yet got to the stage of producing their own—and this also applies to a good deal of the machinery they need for both their industries and their military undertakings. The names we see on nearly all the cars and trucks—Ford, Chevrolet, and the like—illustrate the cheapness of outlay which is a primary

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consideration in enterprises throughout the country. For the matter of that, there are two good reasons why British small cars should be the most suitable and popular for use in Japan. These handy little vehicles are the only ones that could pass each other on the narrow roads found all over the country; moreover, the Japanese can fold themselves away into odd corners, needing little space in transport. But that is another story, and Americans hold the market.

In most town streets vehicles and pedestrians share the roadway, meandering round each other without any particular rule of the road. It is only in the main streets of the bigger cities that they have pavements, a new-fangled notion copied sparingly from abroad, or from the 'foreign settlements' in the ports. These settlements are traces of the old days when Europeans lived apart, under the jurisdiction of their own national consuls, as they still do in China. Times appear to have changed in Japan, though only on the surface. The outsiders who succeeded in gaining a footing in the country have been brought under national authority. Foreign business men are especially ironical about the much-talked-of Open Door, which they describe as an official invitation for them to get out and stay out. There can be few countries where conditions are so difficult for the foreign trader.

On the other hand, some sort of welcome is granted to the American missionaries, the most numerous class of outsiders in Japan. Whereas the foreign merchants are doing their best to make money out of the country, the religious and social efforts of the Christian missions are officially regarded as a contribution to the nation's income, though diminished since the crash in the United States.

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At the same time these foreign preachers are looked upon as more or less harmless; the national pride can be safely trusted as a bulwark against any alien religion with humility as one of its doctrines.

Most of these foreign residents, whether mercantile or evangelical, are to be found in the bigger cities, such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Nagoya, and Kobe. It is curious to find all the biggest centres of population in a line along the south coast of the main island, corresponding in fact to the route taken by ocean liners on their way between Asia and America. This location of great cities on a long waterfront is, of course, due to geographical reasons, but at the same time it is a striking symbol of national characteristics. It is like a façade exhibited to the outer world; it resembles the Japanese smile, or the romantic glamour with which the country has surrounded itself. It even bears a relation to the Japanese language, with all its archaic forms of script and printing retained in order to hinder outsiders' prying eyes as much as possible.

The line of demarcation, however, is often very thin. Ancient and modern, East and West, lie surprisingly close to each other, or are inseparably mixed together. In Tokyo one can step a yard or two off a main street, with its trams, show-windows, and sky-signs, and find oneself almost in another world, of low, overhanging roofs, strange cooking odours, and plaintive music from behind the lattice screens.

### 2. UP-COUNTRY

One of the most appalling features of modern civilization is that great medley of humbug and gibberish which masquerades under the title of 'geography.' With our

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fussy little maps and books we coolly assume a comprehensive knowledge of places and conditions of which we can never have any real idea. At one lordly glance we take in whole cities, countries, continents. Juggling about with our second-hand information, we make the most freakish deductions and assertions, in what is fashionably known as the scientific treatment of the subject.

We cloak our dismal ignorance with an array of imposing diagrams, graphs, and other tangles of imaginary lines. The most hardened traveller never yet saw such a thing as an 'isotherm' or a 'climatic region,' and people everywhere have always got on quite well without these gewgaws, which have no connexion with actuality. We deliberately mislead our innocent youth, or the trusting man in the street, with our jargon of 'shipping lanes' and 'ocean highways,' which we misrepresent on paper by means of thick black lines, broad in proportion to what we are pleased to call the 'volume of trade.'

In actual practice it is the exception to meet any other vessel on an ocean voyage, though we know that the radio men are in touch with ships far out of sight. Hour after hour, day after day, our boat moves on slowly but steadily, the only tangible object in the vast circle of green and blue. We can never quite lose the feeling of awe, of wonder at the daring of seamen, venturing so far in a thin steel shell, aided only by their own skill.

On land too the business of getting to know a country and its people is no matter of drawing wriggly lines and sweeping conclusions, but a much more gradual process. Our first view is most probably the long thin edge of the coast, low down on the horizon, the details little by little coming into shape. We penetrate the country bit by bit.

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While living there we try to learn what we can, but we find that our best knowledge comes incidentally. We can check it up by comparison with other people's, avoiding above all extremity of opinion, and aiming rather at accuracy of fact.

To reach that part of the country where we spent most of the years having a close look at the real Japan we must leave the big ports far behind, and travel away up-country (right across the main island, in fact), and on to the north-west coast, facing the Japan Sea—the Lake of Nippon, as it is now sometimes called, in view of its increasingly important position between the home islands and Manchuria, on the Asiatic mainland. Our journey will give us a cross-section of this island country, as well as a typical example of railway travelling here. By rail, you will notice, for the general state of the roads prevents them from being used by anything but small local buses and peasants' handcars. The Government railways enjoy almost a monopoly of transport for both passengers and freight.

In the early days of European innovations, about sixty years ago, the Japanese authorities had to decide between ordinary- and narrow-gauge railways. They chose the latter, not so much because the smaller accommodation seemed fitted to Japanese limbs, but as a great saving of trouble and expense in the construction of tracks, bridges, and tunnels in such mountainous country. Nowadays they wish they had full-gauge lines, as in Korea and Manchuria; and, of course, the blame is laid on those early foreign engineers whose advice was so politely disregarded.

A further economy in trouble and expense was made by the laying of single track, with loops at the stations, a



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system which still holds in most parts of the country. Trains often have to wait for others coming in the opposite direction; one delay holds up the whole line, but if the stoppage becomes too great it can be smoothed out by the crossing of a train or two off the time-table, the following ones being left to carry on.

As a rule no distinction is made between local and long-distance runs. The same train that carries travellers from one end of the country to another, in anything up to a couple of days, stops at every station on the way to pick up passengers from one village to the next. The idea of extra trains for holiday times does not enter the mind of officials, for whom, in any case, the procedure in all emergencies consists of a lengthy consultation and solemn reference to regulations. We have often seen a coach or two detached from a heavily laden train, as per schedule and at a given point on the route, the passengers being obliged to climb into the other already overcrowded carriages.

Like most other things in the country, railway carriages are made on a standardized plan. There is an entrance at each end, with a narrow passage running down the middle and short cross-seats on each side, there being, of course, no separate compartments. First-class is found only in certain trains and on certain main routes. Usually the only accommodation offering any measure of space or comfort is the second-class, which more or less approximates to the English third. To meet ordinary Japanese folk on the move there is nothing so interesting as the third-class, though the box-like seats and the general crowding can be really painful on a long trip. To Westerners it all looks rather undersized for a real train, though too big for a miniature. You must watch out for your head, shoulders, and other

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major prominences, and dispose of your bulky limbs as best you may.

In a straight line our present journey would be a good deal less than the distance from London to Manchester; but on a Japanese railway there is very little straight line, and still less level, so it is not surprising that we shall be ten hours or more on the way. Of course, we could do it by sleeping-car during the night, but a day trip, though tiring, will show us the country. By whatever route we travel through to the other side of the island our cross-sectional view will be similar. For some time our train runs along the coastal plain, with its endless patchwork of rice-fields, laboriously tilled by stooping, sun-bronzed peasants, whose closer acquaintance we shall make in due time.

We turn inland towards the mountains; soon we are right among them, as the railway climbs the valleys, with increasingly steep gradients and sharp windings. Sometimes there is no space for a curve of any kind; the train runs up to a dead end, then backs out on to a higher incline. In these mountain sections every train has an engine at each end, and the drivers have an unenviable task. There are certain notorious tunnels where men on the unprotected footplate have been suffocated by the smoke and fumes as the engine crawls and pants upward. In fact, the forces of nature seem to conspire to break these lines of human communication. We appreciate the tremendous difficulties against which the engineers and workmen must struggle endlessly in order to maintain even a single narrow-gauge track—typical, indeed, of the task of so many inhabitants to wrest a living from the limited resources of these islands.

It can be imagined that winter is the worst time for the

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railways running through the central mountain range. Very few people venture then to travel this way—only those on urgent business. It is almost a matter of routine for the tracks to be buried many feet deep in snow. Train-loads of passengers have to stay just where they are for hours or even days. Snow-ploughs are often buried too; troops are called out to the rescue, while the local peasants are regularly employed to keep the track clear, till the next blizzard starts the whole struggle over again.

Flooding rainstorms add to the engineers' difficulties at other times of the year. It is nothing uncommon for an attendant to come along the train announcing that, owing to a broken bridge, a sagging tunnel, or a washed-out line, passengers must be prepared to wait for some hours, or go back to where they started, or make a *détour* of a hundred miles.

On our present trip, however, we shall be spared such inconveniences. We have agreeably enough time to get a first impression of the grand scenery. The lofty peaks and rocky upper slopes, which would be snow-covered at any other season, tower bare and craggy now. In the vast pine-clad hillsides we recognize the inspiration of many a Japanese picture. Soon we are rattling down the valleys on the far side; we run out on to the coastal plain, with its luscious green expanse of rice-fields, dotted here and there with grey-roofed villages. Single farmsteads are closely surrounded by overhanging trees; now and then the white *torii* of a shrine peeps out from a group of lofty cedars.

At last we reach our destination. The train runs into the greyness of a biggish town. Some distance away we can make out the masts and funnels of steamers in one of the few harbours on this coast. Here and there rise the smoking chimneys and concrete buildings of various

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factories: modern industrialization amid the surroundings of Old Japan.

On our arrival in 1925 my wife and I were the first foreigners to live in that district; in fact, for some time we were the only white people there, and many of the inhabitants seemed never to have seen such a phenomenon or apparition before. In those days there were very few motor-vehicles about; we rode off in a couple of rickshas to the Japanese house we were to occupy.

Our luggage resembled the outfit of an African exploring expedition. We had had to take with us everything we needed, for the simple reason that articles of everyday use are so vastly different between East and West. Things taken for granted at home were quite unobtainable out there. Having had plenty of time to get ready before leaving England, we had obtained information and advice from Europeans living in Japan, and so we came well prepared, in which respect we were much luckier than many Westerners we met out there. One French lady we knew found her dainty Parisian footwear ill suited to the atrocious roads of Nippon. An English couple, with thoughts of foreign communities in Shanghai or Hong Kong, were well supplied with evening wear, but wished they had brought thick blankets instead.

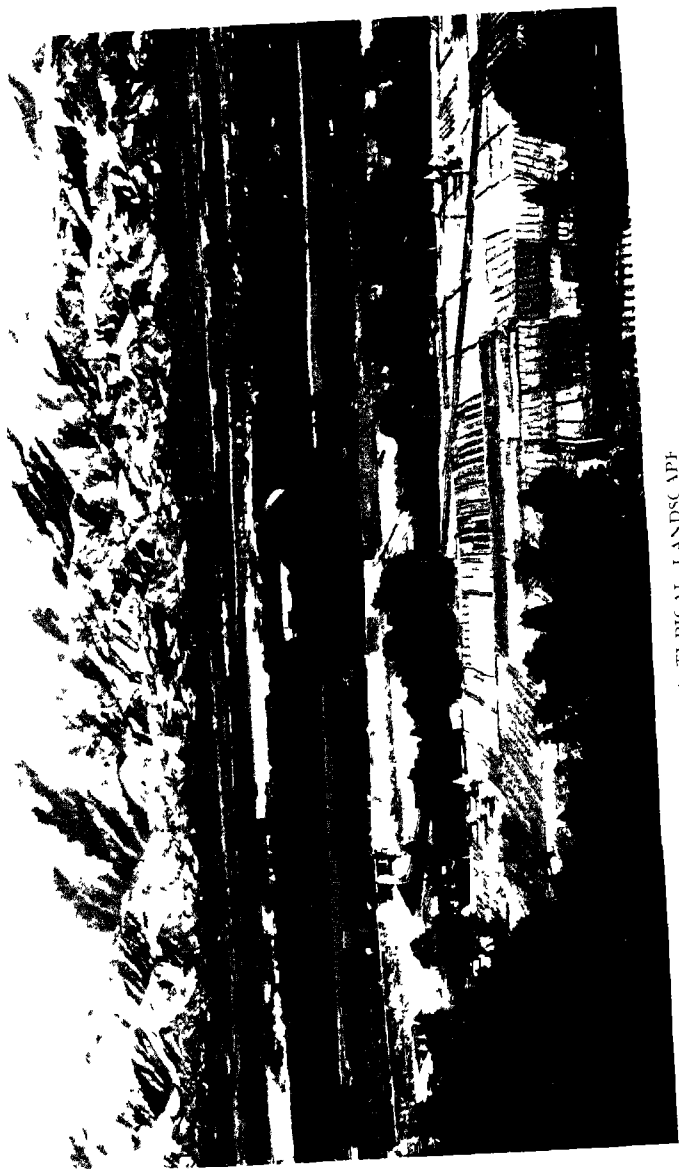
Contrary to popular notions of perpetual sunshine, butterflies, and cherry-blossoms, the climate of Japan can be distinctly unpleasant, especially in certain parts of the country—sweltering in summer, with slushy snow and grey skies for months during the winter. Thus informed, we brought tropical clothing and mosquito-nets, water-proofs and woollens, to be ready for it both ways. Besides

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such special equipment, our baggage included, as mentioned, a stock of the most ordinary articles for daily use: household linen and cutlery, a portable oven, Primus stoves and other kitchen utensils, down to needles and pins and lengths of elastic for hems and things. Even where such articles are obtainable nowadays the native products are often of uncertain form and quality.

For foreign residents in such places the business of getting regular provisions, and housekeeping generally, is a complicated affair. Just imagine yourself living, for example, in a place like Middlesbrough. Every other day or so a messenger brings bread, butter, canned goods and other groceries from Sunderland or York. Bigger consignments you order monthly from foreign firms in London or Southampton, incidentally paying anything up to 100 per cent. luxury tax on imported goods, the Japanese definition of a luxury being "Everything that is absolutely necessary for foreign residents."

You get cheese, canned cream, occasionally veal or mutton, from Scotland, as it were. Ham and bacon come from Canterbury, autumn walnuts and quince jelly from Derby, and lemons from the Channel Isles. Prices, of course, are in proportion to the difficulty of getting such supplies. How would you like to be paying the equivalent of 2s. a pound for jam or marmalade, 3s. 1d. for condensed milk, and up to 7s. for a pound of tea? Monthly accounts are settled by remittances through the post-office, involving further incidental expenses, not to mention the deciphering and filling up of many documents in an antediluvian script that looks like hieroglyphics. No wonder that while on a visit to England we were amused and astounded at the ease with which people just pop round to a shop and get what they want!



A TYPICAL LANDSCAPE



AT A SHINTO SHRINE

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Western men can sometimes get suits and shoes of a sort, but for their womenfolk there is nothing of the kind. The usual thing is for both man and wife to take out stocks of clothing enough to last till the next trip home. A couple of American friends tell the story that when they landed in Seattle after seven years in Japan the hotel bell-hop looked them over and murmured, "Gee, look what's come!" One of my first acts on furlough was to invest in some pairs of hefty English brogues. A friend described them as terrible, but then, he had never seen the Japanese pseudo-roads they were meant for.

A Russian neighbour who arrived some years after us had great ideas of engaging a cook-valet-footman for his bachelor establishment, but soon found that he had to put up with a servant who had no idea of boiling an egg or making tea. It is tough pioneering for any Western housewife up-country there, but it is a good deal worse for any misguided unmarried men who have to depend on a native cook or servant. With one accord these poor exiles begin to fade away through ruined digestion and general neglect.

In the matter of domestic help we were distinctly lucky. Our good Nakagawa-san was not merely a servant, but a most useful aid and adviser in important matters such as tradesmen's prices and local customs, and in many other ways. When a 'foreign-style' house was eventually built for us she must have thought it a very strange affair, but she soon got the hang of things even in that, and she jogged along slowly but very steadily with the housework all the years we were there. On both sides we felt mightily sorry at saying good-bye.



## CHAPTER II

### *People and Houses*

#### I. DRESS AND HAIRDRESSING

FOR Western people to live in a Japanese house, as we did for some time, is surely one of the queerest possible experiences of makeshift and compromise. The poet who sang that East is East and West is the other thing must have had this sort of incompatibility in mind. Nothing seems to fit, on one side or the other. The standardized house dimensions in Japan are such that an average-sized European is always bumping himself on the head. When you expect any given fitting to swing or turn, as most of ours do at home, it slides—that is, if and when you discover how to move it at all. There being no furniture in our sense of the word, foreign householders have to do the best they can in finding or adapting chairs, tables, and other things they need. Westerners, accustomed as they are to sitting up and walking about, can never make themselves really at home in surroundings meant for people who always squat and shuffle about on the floor. It would serve no useful purpose, therefore, to describe a Japanese house from a foreigner's point of view. We shall see it later as the natural setting for the Japanese people themselves. For them housing is inseparably bound up with the style of clothing. This, indeed, is one of the first things we must be able to picture to ourselves, as people's appearance helps us considerably in understanding their modes of life.

The distinguishing feature of Japanese dress is, of course,

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the *kimono*, worn by both men and women, though in a different form. But while the men are taking more and more to European suits, even if of a very local cut, as a sign of up-to-dateness, women keep strictly to their traditional garb. In some parts of the biggest cities a few younger women wear foreign-style dress, but public-minded men periodically bemoan these isolated exceptions as a sure and shocking sign that the nation is heading for perdition.

Though so few women venture to break away from the age-old costume, many of them now criticize it severely on the score of discomfort and bad effect on health. As far as appearances go, at any rate, there is something exceptionally graceful and picturesque in the women's *kimono* and *obi*, surmounted by the neatly dressed hair. Whatever their station and whatever the occasion, the women show remarkably good taste in the blending of colour and style. These, by the way, are strictly ordered by convention according to age, social rank, and other standards, and this applies equally to other parts of the general make-up.

The care of the hair is a complicated process. As we lived for some time next door to a women's hairdresser's, with glass windows or open screens, we got an insight into the mysteries. At any hour of the day, from early morn till late at night, women could be seen waiting their turn, and filling in the time of waiting—anything from a few minutes to a whole morning or afternoon—with local gossip, just as anywhere else in the world. In fact, that particular establishment was well known as a gossip exchange, and we could rest quite assured that a favourite topic was the queer doings of the foreigners in the next house.

Oriental hair is long, thick, absolutely straight, and of a

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wonderful glossy blackness. As every one has this same kind of hair it naturally follows that the varieties of colour and texture shown by Europeans are regarded with aversion in the East. The men have abandoned their old wig-like styles, and usually wear their raven locks brushed straight back, like those of Southern Europe. Women leave their hair at full length; it would seem a sacrilege to apply Western trims and snips to such luxuriant tresses.

After much combing and oiling the whole mass is set according to requirements. Younger women wear the wide and lofty coils so often seen in Oriental pictures; their seniors have simpler arrangements. Various pins and combs may be added for ornament, but these can be removed without affecting the set of the hair, which is tied and fixed in position, and then left more or less untouched for some days, till the next visit to the hairdresser's. Obviously no hat can be worn on such a *coiffure*, neither can a pillow be used for rest or sleep. The neck is laid on a small hard pad stuffed with rice-chaff, or the newer and more merciful kind, of spongy rubber.

The hazy notions enjoyed by folks at home on the subject of Japanese costume just come under the heading of things to be taken for granted, and there is not much that can be done about it. At a 'Japanese bazaar' in aid of the new parish hall gay damsels array themselves in a flowery bathrobe, with a gaudy sash, a chrysanthemum behind the ear, and hey presto the pretty Yum-Yums! A friend of ours once sent a lovely Japanese outfit to a niece in Paris, with full instructions as to wearing it. She was horrified on receiving a photo of it as worn by the niece: it had been draped with impossible strings of beads. At a fancy-dress ball on an ocean steamer a girl passenger appeared in

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motley pyjamas she had bought in Shanghai, and won first prize as a Japanese lady. Even in a New York presentation of *The Mikado* half the chorus of American professional actresses were nominally corpses, as they were wearing their *kimono* folded from right to left, in the manner employed only for the dead.

While on this hypercritical and censorious track I should like to express regret at the form given to that very comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan. Every one knows that it is a clever and impersonal satire on bureaucracy and other embellishments of Western civilization. At the same time, to anyone who knows Japan at all it seems a thousand pities that this harmless piece of fun should have what might be taken for a Nipponese atmosphere; that it brings in names and figures which are held in the highest reverence by the Japanese themselves, and which, without any desire to make empty compliments, one can describe as belonging to the most admirable side of their national life.

For the matter of that, the word *Mikado* is unused in Japan. And just as 'chop-suey' is a Chinese dish obtainable anywhere but in China, so the Japanese would be puzzled at the expressions 'hari-kari,' 'jiu-jitsu,' 'kimona,' and similar poorly imitated words so well known to Western ears. Not that the Japanese are at all careful with Western vocabulary, but that is a matter we shall meet in its proper place.

To the uninitiated the *kimono*, so gracefully worn by a Japanese woman, may appear simple, but actually the whole dress is a most complicated and expensive affair. In the place of underclothing in the Western sense there is a series of intermediate *kimono*-shaped garments, all fitting closely into each other, fold upon fold. When a Japanese couple

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we know were visiting some friends of ours in London, and the wife went with her hostess to buy a European outfit, the English lady was mightily intrigued by the interminable layers shed by her guest. Incidentally, Mrs Nakahashi appeared to know what she wanted to buy, and showed just as good taste in London as she would at home.

The outer *kimono* and its appurtenances are the most exacting part of all. Contrary to popular notions of flowery silks, which are supposed to be universal in Japan, bright colours are allowed only for children (reds for little girls, blues for boys) and for unmarried women—that is to say, only the younger ones, for any spinster much over twenty is considered an abnormality. After marriage there follow successive stages of more sober hues, especially dark blue and brown. The patterns vary according to seasonal fashion, but the general form of the whole dress remains more or less unchanged.

A most important item is the *obi*, the broad sash always worn over the *kimono*, not round the waist but high up under the armpits. It is made of doubled silk, about eight inches wide and ten feet long, and is wrapped tightly round and round the body. It is admittedly heavy and cumbrous, but, like conventional discomforts the world over, it shows no sign of being discarded. Towards the end of a long railway journey, during which people have made themselves comfortable in varying stages of undress, women may be seen helping each other into their *obi*, like Indians winding themselves into their cummerbund. Some women wear a ready-made *obi* which can be easily slipped on and fastened, but the fitting of the ordinary *obi* is laborious, requiring the exact placing of each fold, to make the huge flat bow at the back, showing the exquisite pattern to full

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advantage. Due attention must also be given to a bewildering number of silken cords, clips, and other accessories, but little or no jewellery of any kind is worn.

Outside the house women usually wear a light cloak, and carry one of the wide umbrellas of bamboo strips and oiled paper as a protection from wet. One thing, by the way, is practically never seen: women touching up hair or complexion in public. Not so long ago it was still the fashion to have rice-powder thickly applied, making a ghastly whiteness. Nowadays, however, modern cosmetics are used with that high art which is self-concealing.

The general appearance of Japanese male dress is not so easy to describe, partly because of the two distinct styles, native and foreign, partly because of the extraordinary ways in which the two are often mixed, yielding an effect which may best be described as foreign to anything else on earth. A *kimono* is sometimes crowned with a dusty old bowler hat, and nowadays most men imprison their rich black hair in some sort of soft felt hat, which often looks limp and shapeless, as cleaning and blocking are not very much known.

It is quite the thing for a man to wear his sock-suspenders outside his trouser-legs. One gets accustomed to the exposure of the human form, divine or no, and still more to the display of male underclothing—the upper parts of the vest at the wide, open neck of the *kimono*, or long lengths of under-pants, protruding from beneath its flapping skirts.

Ceremony being such an essential ingredient of national life, Western formal dress is in great demand by all who can possibly lay claim to any official standing whatever, and

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their name is legion. On festivals and similar occasions they solemnly appear in top hats and frock-coats or swallow-tails, still showing the dust and creases accumulated during the years, and often supplemented by a green tie, blue socks, brown slippers, or something like that.

Truth to tell, in many cases the wearing of foreign dress cannot be regarded as a success. In a *kimono*, as it has been said by some kindly critic, anyone can look dignified. The voluminous folds conceal the bodily peculiarities which are ruthlessly revealed by the self-inflicted foreign modes. The clear-cut lines of Western suits do not fit Japanese proportions. There is a Humpty-dumpty effect, with arms and legs seeming to leave off too early. Moreover, the age-old custom of squatting on the floor has had its effect on the formation of the nether limbs, which are short and peculiarly jointed. Added to this is the characteristic gait derived from the wooden sandals most commonly worn; the general movement of walking in *kimono* can quite justly be described as a jerky flapping and swaying; in foreign dress it is a stiff-legged strut or flat-footed waddle.

### 2. FOOTGEAR

One of the most unforgettable features of life in Japan is the national footgear, the extraordinary wooden *geta*, which can hardly be called clogs or sandals, but are a mixture of the two, and yet something quite apart, peculiar to the country. They are among the first things noticed on one's arrival there. Their almost xylophonic *clip-clop-clip-clop* resounds in one's ears every day and everywhere. On going afterwards to any other country one is struck by the silence and smoothness of pedestrians' movements;

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on returning to Japan one again notices the jerking, clattering movements of every one wearing *geta*.

These primitive *geta* are still kept in general use on account of their cheapness, and because they seem well fitted to the primitive roads and streets, mere pebbly tracks, which in the frequent spells of rainy weather are covered with thick slush. Wheeled vehicles splash merrily through the puddles; slow-moving pedestrians make patient *détours* round the deepest of them. The finest of leather shoes would suffer severely in such conditions, but wooden *geta* do not matter; they can be easily mended or thrown away.

The nucleus of each *geta* is a single oblong block of wood, rounded at the corners, flat on top, and convex underneath, with two wooden cross-strips fixed in grooves cut through this lower surface. Fastened to the upper surface is a cord covered with cloth or thin leather, something like a rounded sandal strap. It is in the form of a V, the point being attached at the front or toe-end of the block, and the two separate ends of the cord being attached one at each side. Under the two diagonal loops thus formed the wearer slips or wriggles his foot, the big toe on one side of the V point, the remaining four toes on the other side. This grip is painful to the uninitiated outsider, even disillusioning to the enthusiastic newcomer who proposes to adopt Japanese dress completely, just to show the world how thoroughly he understands and appreciates national ideals and aspirations. To the natives this grip is automatic from long practice since infancy; the space next to the big toe adapts itself. One often sees people stepping into or out of their *geta* at a doorway with hardly a pause in their stride.

The flat upper surface does not remain close to the sole



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of the foot when walking. The only point of cohesion seems to be at the toes, over which, as indicated, the padded cords are looped. The result is like the flapping shuffle of down-at-heel slippers, but much more noisy. *Geta* are made in different sizes, according to the wearer's stature, but they approximate only vaguely to the size of the foot, and never to its shape. Their oblong outline often includes more than ample breadth; just as often the wearer's heels project far over the back of the flat wooden block, with no apparent discomfort. Small children slip into their parents' *geta* at the doorway, and toddle off with a gawky clatter.

Seen from the side, a *geta* looks rather like a small model of an old-fashioned stool, the legs being represented by the wooden cross-strips tightly fitted into the two slots cut squarely through the rounded under-surface. These cross-strips vary in height—up to several inches for use in wet weather or by students and other ambitious young men who wish to add something to the diminutive stature of their race. The wood is, of course, fitted so that it is the end of the grain which comes into contact with the ground. This lower edge gets rubbed away with use; the woody fibres look torn and dog's-eared, like the stumpy bristles of a worn-out brush. Repair is simple: the *geta*-maker either pares the edges level or, if they are too badly worn, just pulls out the cross-strips and fits new ones in the grooves. The rough roadway often loosens the cord which goes over the toes; people may be seen by the roadside fixing up the fastening before they can go on, for a disabled *geta* is about as awkward as a pair of skis to a beginner. At festivals and places where there are likely to be crowds of passers-by there is usually a man squatting in a convenient

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spot to do quick repairs. A fresh cord or a set of cross-strips costs only a few coppers; a new pair of ordinary *geta* can be got for a shilling or so.

Apart from the collecting of representative specimens we have found a good deal of interest in *geta*-shops, as in others where so many articles of daily use are turned out by hand. Hobnobbing with handicraftsmen is an instructive pastime—what our scientific geographers might call “a fruitful line of research in the principles of human adaptation to natural environment.”

The general form of Japanese footwear remains, like that of the *kimono*, unchanged, though the pattern varies. Even in such simple wooden articles there are many styles, at all prices, from the cheapest, plainest bits of wood to the expensive lacquered models for ceremonial wear.

Socks and stockings as we know them are not worn. The *tabi* is a close-fitting foot-covering made of cloth, white for women, black for men. It hardly comes up past the ankle; it is pulled on and clipped up the back. There is, of course, a division 'twixt big toe and second, to fit the rounded strap by which the *geta* is held on to the foot.

While showing examples of *geta* and other apparel to people at home we got the inevitable question from some bright youths, “How do they play football in things like those?” As a matter of fact, they don't, though we have once or twice seen a misguided spectator take a flying kick at a ball which has rolled into touch, with disastrous results to toes and *geta*-strap. Men often ride a bicycle while wearing *geta*, and look precariously awkward in doing so; but there is really only one action that can be carried out on these clumsy wooden supports, and that is walking—of a

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kind. It can be imagined that there is a peculiar effect on the wearer's gait, as they entirely prevent any heel-and-toe movement with the feet at the natural angle. Instead the foot is raised only slightly, the *geta* hanging low or scraping the ground, and coming down *clip-clop* on the wooden cross-strips. The feet point more or less straight forward, or, especially in the case of women, the toes are turned in. Each step is necessarily short. When people are in a hurry they break into a sort of jog-trot, then relapse into a hurried walk, trotting again at intervals, with a noise that sounds like the drumming of sticks on wooden boards. At all times the legs are held stiffly, the body is thrown forward, and every part of it joins in the general swaying and jerking. The whole appearance and movement is so strange that it can hardly be realized until the people are actually seen walking in this manner. You might get something like the effect by tying a small box or a block of wood under the instep of your shoes, and trying to get along in that way.

Men and women carrying heavy loads, pulling carts, or otherwise at work must wear footgear allowing greater freedom and sureness of movement—for example, the old-fashioned *zori*, which are straw sandals, soon worn out and thrown away. Nowadays many workmen go about in a sort of combination *tabi*, with cotton uppers and rubber soles, the partition being preserved next to the big toe for ease and comfort. This 'cloven hoof' is often to be seen in shoes worn at games, but this form is limited to native sports-people. The cheap exported Japanese shoes of cotton and rubber, which have been gaining notoriety in international trade, are an imitation of Western patterns.

Among the many interesting things learned through

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contact with young sportsmen out there I found that football boots, copied from foreign patterns, were often too small for the players, and generally ill-fitted to Japanese feet, which have shapes and sizes of their own. Tightness is often relieved, at least a little, by the player's wearing no socks or stockings—only pull-overs that leave the foot bare inside the boot. The resulting blisters and abrasions are frightful, but nothing seems to be learned by painful experience. Boots and other gear are left ungreased and uncared for, getting harder and more uncomfortable, and soon falling to pieces. It is all typical of the fate of Western modernities among Orientals, who have never quite learned how to use them.

As previously suggested, real leather shoes are a luxury still beyond the means of the majority. The usual compromise has appeared, in the form of rubber shoes moulded more or less to look like leather footwear. These are cheap but by no means healthy, particularly when worn with ragged cotton socks, or none at all. The rubber soon splits and wears away, and it cannot be mended.

Even for those who can afford them leather boots and shoes do not give the service that would be expected of them in Western countries. In the first place, although Japanese manufacturers know how to give a smart appearance to new leather articles, as to many other things, the actual preparation of the material often leaves much to be desired. Added to this is the usual neglect of upkeep and a surprising ignorance in the simplest matters of repair. Young men invest in a stout-looking pair of hiking or ski boots, which are then worn day in day out, never mended or even cleaned, until they fall to pieces. Even well-made English shoes soon go right out of shape, owing to the pebbles and

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mud. We could never get them properly repaired; cobblers have never learned the gentle art of building up according to points of greatest wear. They just whack on a slab of leather, which may be no more durable than a layer of cardboard, and which soon comes adrift, owing to insufficient fastening, usually at the instep. Each time we landed back in England, if we handed such shoes in to a shop for repair, without any comment as to where and by whom they had been mishandled, we got the same expressions of surprise and horror from the assistants.

Whether shoes worn by the Japanese are of leather or rubber, it is most likely that socks, if any, are in a parlous condition. Cheap Japanese hosiery is advertised all over the world, but reliable stuff is scarce even in the country itself. Though Japanese housewives are assiduous and intelligent in taking up Western methods when they get a proper chance, the darning of hosiery is an art not very well known. Not that flimsy socks are worth the trouble; they are often thrown away without even once being washed. It is the oft-repeated story: cheap production and lack of maintenance.

Hosiery can hardly be expected as a strong line among people who have for ages gone barefoot, and who still keep up the custom, even in the rigours of a climate so far removed from their South Sea origins. In the winter, any time from November to April, we ourselves, like other foreigners and strangers to the climate, reckoned on an outdoor outfit of waterproof coat and hat, warm gloves, and knee-high rubber boots, in which we strode along in comfort. We wasted a whole lot of sympathy on the inhabitants, shuffling through the slushy snow on their wooden *geta*, often with bare feet or sodden-cold *tabi*,

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holding up their flapping *kimono* and exposing their unprotected legs. Many of the men wear long rubber boots, but few women yet venture to appear in them. We bought a pair for our daily woman help on her morning and afternoon trudge, but we had great difficulty in getting her to use them. To us it also seemed extraordinary that people letting their feet get numbed with cold would muffle up their throats and faces—another instance of opposites in East and West.

Some years ago the papers in America started an inquiry into the disappearance of elastic-sided boots, which, owing to their association with clerical wearers, had been known as 'evangelastics.' They have reappeared in Japan, where they meet a special need, being easily pulled off or on at the doorway of a house. Press photographers never need to go chasing a Cabinet Minister or other celebrity; they just lie in wait, and catch him in the helpless moments of crumpling up his squat figure to don or doff his shoes—a most common pose in newspaper portraits.

In writing an essay on differences between East and West several students informed me that in England they wipe their shoes on the mat, while in Japan people leave their 'scandals' at the door. It always has been and always must be an inviolable custom to leave one's footgear behind when entering a Japanese house, owing to the peculiar thick straw mats of which the floor is made, as we shall see later—not to mention the usual filthy state of the roads outside.

Styles of personal clothing and of house-construction are reciprocal problems, economic and psychological. It would cost too much to bring about wholesale changes in domestic architecture, even if there were any desire to make

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them. And so, although foreign dress is being used more extensively, it is reserved almost entirely for men's use during business hours. Back at home it is at once discarded for the voluminous native garments, so comfortable for squatting on the floor. Even more than in other Oriental countries this reduplication is a symbol of all the national life: the progressive but unwonted and uneasy appearance presented to the world, and the old-fashioned traditions which remain unchanged beneath.

### 3. *FACES*

The general strangeness of people's facial features is sure to be one of the first things to strike a newcomer in Japan, but the details of that strangeness may take some time to analyse. At first all faces may appear the same to him, but, especially if he is already accustomed to living among races other than his own, he will not be long in recognizing types and individuals. However, just as he will always be regarded as a queer outsider, no matter how long he stays in the country, so he will never get quite accustomed to native characteristics. This is only in accordance with their national reputation anywhere in the world. Even in communities where negroes are taken for granted and Indians pass unnoticed there is something in the appearance and behaviour of a Japanese that marks him off from all others.

Curiously enough, Chinese and Japanese are often unable to distinguish themselves one from the other, until they speak or make some gesture which can be recognized as typical of one nation or the other. Although the Japanese have assimilated a great deal of civilization from







MOUNT SAKA, A VOLCANO SNOW-COVERED IN WINTER



A FISHING VILLAGE, REMINISCENT OF THE SOUTH SEAS  
S. I.

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their mainland neighbours, ethnologists are now very much debating any question of a common origin. In any case, the yellow colour commonly ascribed to Far Eastern races could better be termed brown, or at least a tawny shade. Indoor workers are of a sallow complexion, but peasants much exposed to the sun are of a coppery hue; the nearer one sees them to a state of nature, the deeper the tint.

In the general structure of the Nipponese face the development of certain features appears in inverse ratio to the European normal. The bones of the cheek and jaw are prominent, but, on the other hand, the chin is often receding, and the nose is flat, with little or no bridge arising from the upper part of the face, and the lower end of the nostrils spreading broadly on either side. The negroid appearance is increased by the thick, protruding lips.

It is not uncommon to see an elegant citizen with every visible tooth richly embellished with gold. This precious metal looks odd in the mouths of coolies, artisans, and other humble toilers, who, for the matter of that, have a remarkable liking for horn-rimmed spectacles and white cotton gloves while at work. During a gold boom an unemployed workman was arrested for selling the metal without a permit. In some bygone period of plenty he had had all possible teeth gold-filled, as a sort of security against leaner years. He had disposed of one filling after another, and was standing in the street seeking a customer for the last one when the police stepped in. On hearing his explanation, however, they discharged him with a caution.

Japan, by the way, is the home of toothbrushes. When we were equipping before going out there we found that the brushes we bought in England were already inscribed

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with the name of our destination. Those used in the country itself are fitted with a flexible scraper for cleaning the tongue. Morning ablutions include a period of hoarse rasping and gurgling a long way down the larynx. The toothbrush itself is plied for a goodly fraction of an hour; the user may be seen walking about with the handle sticking out of his mouth, presumably while giving his arms a rest. In the middle of a railway journey a passenger may take out toothbrush and paste and start operations as he walks towards the lavatory. In spite of so much solicitude, dental decay often joins with digestive troubles in creating an overpowering atmosphere.

The most peculiar thing about the Japanese face is the set of the eyes. There appear to be no eyelids, but just a slight continuation of the skin of the forehead, which thus adds to the general flatness and immobility of expression. The eye apertures have a contour all their own, while the upper and lower rows of eyelashes converge—again just the contrary of the West. Since the natural position of human organs of vision is horizontal, and Orientals have been from time immemorial in the habit of reading and writing vertically, it would appear that the typical slant of their almond-shaped eyes is the inevitable resultant of these two forces.

In view of the complicated Chinese characters still used in the Japanese language, not to mention the neglect of hygiene in childhood, the prevalence of poor eyesight is not surprising. On meeting any fresh group of students my own first method of general identification and classification was: Goggles or no goggles—about fifty-fifty. The prevalent wearing of spectacles, however, often has less reference to optical needs than to the intellectual

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appearance assumed by the wearer. Even American publicists display nothing more conspicuous than the huge black horn-rimmed monstrosities favoured by the Japanese *intelligentsia*. Here is still another unfortunate imitation from abroad, for these large discs serve to emphasize the flatness of the native nose and countenance. There is a quaint perkiness as the wearer tilts his head backward in bringing his headlights to bear on any object of attention.

Oriental inscrutability is a theme on which a good deal of nonsense is poured out, not only by irresponsible writers of fiction. It is curious that a lack of expression, which would be taken as a sign of mental vacuity in the West, is supposed to denote serene profundity when seen in an Oriental. It is an interesting fact that the symptom of an abnormal mental type in Europe is a normal countenance in the East.

To this vacuous expression is often added a prolonged blank stare, a national custom which thrusts itself upon the attention of every foreigner, whether newly arrived visitor or resident of long standing. It is thought very inconsiderate of an outsider to express any objection to this national habit of staring, which would be deemed very ill-mannered in other parts of the world. In a train, in the street or other public place, you will become aware that you are being regarded fixedly, either by some uncouth lout or by some one you imagine ought to know better. If you happen to look in his direction the gazer will betray every sign of embarrassment at being detected; he will look nervously this way and that, fidgeting about and glancing back now and then to see if he is still being watched, but resuming his gaping as soon as he thinks your attention is withdrawn. On a long railway journey, for instance,

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you can catch half a dozen of them at this game for an hour on end.

If they were asked what they had noticed in the stranger they would be unable to tell. In spite of their habit of *staring*, and *sniggering*, at anyone and anything strange, their power of observation is actually very poor, even among themselves. Individuality is, after all, of less importance to Japanese; it is vague and blurred among these people, who have been aptly described as a herd-folk. Following my usual method with other nationalities, I got to know each of my Japanese students as far as ever possible—his appearance, capabilities, and other characteristics. It was often astonishing to find how my Japanese colleagues were quite unable to identify individuals from the mass, how few students they knew even by name. And, granted that at first it may not be easy for them to distinguish between persons of another race, it is remarkable how even those who have travelled abroad often confuse foreigners with whom they have been working for years, and who are of European types quite distinct from each other.

Even more singular than their flat stare is the Japanese smile, about which still more rubbish has been uttered by dealers in the picturesque. Casual visitors are charmed by it; they write pages and pages about it as an expression of unlimited happiness and love for all the world, and still another myth is added to the fog that shrouds the real Japan. In actual practice this smile is a desperate facial contortion. Its folds increase till the narrow almond eyes entirely disappear; the lines of the mouth stretch ever wider towards the ears, and every muscle seems strained almost to snapping-point. It is often accompanied by a shrill giggle, a *staccato* series of *beb-beb-beb-beb-beb*—surely

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the sorriest travesty of a laugh ever made by the human race. Our Chinese neighbours at Nakamichi refreshed us by their hearty laughter from time to time, in contrast with the mirthless cackle of the Japanese. "*Shikata ga nai!*" A nation that takes itself so seriously has no margin left for any sense of humour.

The Japanese have the reputation of being the politest people in the world, and this is true so far as politeness means an external polish, a veneer, no matter what may lie hidden underneath. Such a summary need arouse no furious indignation; it need not be taken even as derogatory, for it is merely a statement of fact, the natural outcome of their history. Foreigners need not be surprised if they are treated as the natives treat each other, with the extremest politeness masking the blackest suspicion. However trivial or serious a conversation, it is freely punctuated with *heb-heb-heb-heb-heb-heb-heb*. Whatever tricks the participants are trying to work on each other, their faces are creased into the conventional and indestructible smile.

### 4. HOUSES

When watching cinema films of life in tropical lands Japanese spectators remark on the similarity between the natives and themselves. Independent anthropologists are now studying certain Japanese characteristics, to demonstrate the South Sea origin of the race, however shocking this view may be to the national prestige. Some years ago I was called to account for using an English exercise containing this sentence: "As in most countries, the origins of history in Japan are lost in mythology." Several young and older men flatly informed me that I was wrong. The

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Nipponese claim as a historical fact that they originated straight from heaven. Most nations manufacture gods to their own pattern, but the Japanese go farther, and regard themselves as divine. Small wonder, then, that they are so woefully misunderstood when they ~~condescend~~ to mix with mere mortals, at Geneva, in the textile trade, or at the Olympic Games.

Descending from celestial sublimities to mundane affairs, however, we discover the fact, surprising though it may seem, that the Japanese have never fully made themselves at home in their own country. Settlers from another clime in a bygone age, they are still unfortunate in having adapted themselves so imperfectly to conditions within the islands, just as nowadays they are so defectively adopting ideas from without. True to the Oriental principle of being opposite to the rest, they are a striking contradiction to the geographer's pet theory that inhabitants fit themselves to their surroundings.

Most of the Japanese islands lie within the same latitude as the Mediterranean Sea, and yet their summer climate is essentially tropical, with moist, depressing heat. On the other hand, in spite of this same latitude, the winter temperature is low, not with a crisp, healthy cold as in Switzerland or Canada, but with thick, slushy snow, which in many places covers the dreary landscape for months, under grey, sunless skies. It is then that the Japanese find their island home most inhospitable, though they do not seem to realize how uncomfortable they are in it. This is especially true of their houses, flimsy constructions, mostly of wood and paper, which seem more suited to a continuously warm climate, but are bleak, cheerless places in the winter, particularly as they lack adequate means of heating.

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Their appearance is strongly reminiscent of the pile dwellings of tropical lands. Propped up on wooden posts, with shaggy roofs of thatch, many a village presents a picture that might have been made in the South Sea Isles. These props, however, are not given any firm foundation. The posts forming the vertical framework of the building are not sunk into the ground, but placed loosely on large stones or, nowadays, on blocks of concrete. The purpose of this arrangement is to give resilience in case of earthquake; theoretically at least, the structure may sway and vibrate, rather than break off, as it might do from a foundation fixed in the ground. Such is the power of national uniformity, by the way, that even in regions where earthquake disasters are unknown this same type of floating building is the rule. The whole purpose, however, is nullified by another urban convention. A wooden framework may be the safest in the circumstances, but on top of this light structure it is the fashion to put a heavy roof of ornamental tiles. In time of earthquake the swaying and vibration bring this top-heavy covering down to the ground, thus splintering the woodwork below and imprisoning the unlucky occupants underneath. The smouldering charcoal, which is the universal means of cooking and warming, sets fire to the paper screens and straw mats, and the usual conflagration completes the destruction. Time after time an earthquake leaves the same picture of desolation: heaps of heavy tiles among burned-out woodwork. But "Shikata ga nai" they say. "It can't be helped!"

One of the first signs of activity on a site cleared for house-building is the putting up of a rough shed, in which



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carpenters get on with the cutting and jointing of all the posts and beams which will go to make up the framework of the new residence. Like most Japanese materials, the timber used is soft. Although it is so easily worked, the carpenters always seem to be resharpening their tools, because the steel of which these are made is in its turn relatively soft. Once again we meet a very obvious case of opposites: Japanese artisans pull saws and planes towards them with a jerky stroke. Workmen visiting our house on business were endlessly interested in the set of tools I had taken out there. Incidentally they were almost horrified that a dignified professor and Government official should condescend to manual work—making things about the house or digging snow away from the garden path. Of course, they wanted to try out these English tools. With a little practice they managed to handle the saw after a fashion, but they could make nothing of the plane. In shovelling, too, Orientals generally give a sort of cross-handed jerk, rather than the full-sized body swing of the burly English or American navvy.

If the Japanese house-builder cares to go to the expense he can get the priests to come and ward off evil spirits, with whisk and verbal warning. Sometimes a bow and pointed arrow are tied on a high pole for the same purpose. At the opening of a new Government establishment one may see the elaborate ritual and priestly vestments of centuries ago, which, after all, may be said to correspond to the familiar picture of a Christian bishop blessing a new dockyard or workhouse in a Western country.

In the marking out of the ground the big round stones or square blocks of concrete which will eventually support the main posts are placed at intervals. The well is dug, and

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lined with a concrete pipe a couple of feet wide. A concrete flooring is also put down for the bathroom, which is certain to be on the ground floor, and a tank of the same material is sunk in the ground for the Honourable Place of Convenience, as it is euphemistically called, and which, as likely as not, occupies a place of honour at one end of the front veranda.

As soon as the carpenters have finished their cutting and jointing there dawns the great day for the erection of the whole framework. Extra hands are called in, sections of the building are fitted together, hauled upright, and placed on the supporting stones. Amid much shouting of instructions and advice, scurrying about and acrobatics overhead, the skeleton of the building takes shape in a few hours. The event is then marked with due celebration—a sort of picnic banquet on the spot, and rice-wine drinking as long as the house-builder's largesse holds out.

Constructional work of any kind is undertaken at the most inclement seasons of the year, when labour is cheapest. As one might expect, the roof must be put on first, and the rest of the building completed underneath it. Over a roof lining of thin shingles the heavy curved tiles are laid, the job being finished off with several layers of ridging and other embellishments. Meanwhile the spaces between the posts and beams are being filled in below, to make the outer walls and inner partitions. One might almost say there are no walls in the ordinary sense. Some parts are made by the attaching of thin strips of wood or reeds to the main timbers, the whole being covered with rough plaster; other spaces are fitted with *shoji*, the well-known screens of paper and wood, sliding to and fro in shallow grooves above and below them. There are few, if any,

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interior walls. Rooms are mostly separated by thick screens of paper and wood. Slide these back and several rooms can be thrown into one.

In authentic, officially recognized geography books at home one of the perennially funny statements most solemnly made is that Japanese houses are built of bamboo. Pieces of this graceful plant may enter into the minor decoration of the interior, but the main construction is of deciduous or coniferous timber. This is usually left bare, except perhaps for a clear varnish or hand polish, and, although the outside weathers to a regrettable drabness in time, the interior woodwork has a simple decorative effect all its own, which one is glad to see unmarred by any addition of paint.

The paper panels in the screens running round the outside are thin and translucent, allowing a certain amount of filtered light to come in, while barring the view of any prying eyes from without. Visibility can easily be achieved, however, by anyone who cares to moisten the tip of his finger and poke it through. This method is especially useful when the house is occupied by those queer foreigners, who, however, are so inconsiderate as to take steps to prevent the continuance of this interesting and instructive pastime.

Obviously these light outer screens would suffer from the exposure if they were not protected by a number of plain wooden slides, which at night or in bad weather are pushed round to cover the whole outside of the house. Next day, usually at some unearthly hour very much A.M., they are shoved and banged back into a sort of cupboard at the end of the veranda.

Ordinary Japanese houses do not have more than two

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stories; in fact, one only would seem to be the normal, for the Sino-Japanese word for 'high' is written with a sign based on the picture of a house with a second story. Their squat appearance is increased by the low roof, whose eaves overhang the building for a couple of feet or more all round, as a protection from hot sun or pouring rain, but at the same time shutting out a great deal of light.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the curious features in a Japanese house the flooring is the most extraordinary. Boards are first laid down, often of the roughest matchwood, and with gaps quite open to the space which runs right under the house between the ground and the lowest timbers. This boarding, however, is quite subsidiary; it does not show from the inside of the room, since it is only the support for the *tatami*, the heavy straw mats, rather like hard, smooth-surfaced mattresses, which are placed side by side or end to end, fitting together to make up the whole floor space. Each *tatami* is exactly the same size, six feet long, three feet wide, and about two inches thick, so that the size of a room is reckoned by the number of mats, from three for a very small one up to eight or ten for a fair-sized room. Other house dimensions are similarly standardized—in accordance with Japanese stature, of course. The *shoji*, *fusuma*, and other sliding screens are interchangeable; it is quite usual for people to take them from one house to another if they are in good enough repair. On the other hand, when screens, mats, and other fittings are showing signs of wear it is quite easy to gather one's simple belongings together and move elsewhere.

The *tatami* seem to be related to the old custom of rush-laying in European countries. They are made of layers of

<sup>1</sup> If there is a second story, it is reached by a kind of glorified step-ladder of smooth, polished wood, fixed to a side-wall, but with no hand-rail.

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straw, cut to size, pressed and stitched together. The top layer is a special covering woven from fine, strong reeds, giving a hard, smooth surface. A black tape edging runs right down each long side of the smooth upper surface, but not across the short ends, because the reed covering is folded over to include and protect them. Owing to the general elasticity of the straw, as well as the thin boarding underneath, a *tatami* floor yields to the tread, making the house reverberate to every movement, even the crouching shuffle with which the native inmates go about.

### 5. AT HOME

It is mostly on account of the straw *tatami* that all foot-gear must be left outside. At the entrance to a Japanese house there is a muddy or dusty assortment of *geta*, rubber shoes, sandals, as well as umbrellas of the ancient bamboo and oiled-paper variety, together with the 'bat,' as the Occidental umbrella is called, on account of its likeness to the spread wings of that creature.

Our best chance of seeing inside a Japanese house is to put on a cloak of invisibility, as it were, and to follow a visitor indoors. To make a visit ourselves would spoil it, as we simply could not fit into the picture. Not only would it be impossible for our limbs to fold themselves in Japanese ways, but we should find it extremely difficult to conform to all the thousand little rules of etiquette so strange to us.

Entering from the street, then, Mrs Okamoto slides back the outer wooden gate in the high garden fence, turns round, and carefully slides it to again. A few of her usual hobbling steps on the clip-clopping *geta* bring her up the tiny path across the miniature garden, which contains the

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customary dwarf shrubs, a small patch of smooth green moss, and a stone lantern. On one side of the door, as at the street gate outside, is inscribed the house number in this section of the town, together with the occupant's name, Yamazaki Isaburo, the Japanese characters being written vertically, in jet-black ink, on a little tablet of wood or white porcelain.

Sliding open the outer door of wooden lattice, the visitor calls, "*Go-men nasai*"<sup>1</sup> Presently the inner door slides back, and Mrs Yamazaki appears, kneeling down just inside, murmuring the customary greetings, and bowing repeatedly, her hands placed carefully on the floor in front of her, and her head coming down again and again to touch them. It would never do to stand while receiving a guest; that would be an insulting insinuation of infinitely higher rank. Meanwhile Mrs Okamoto has been busy bowing and murmuring greetings, apologies for this unwarranted intrusion, and all that.

Deftly slipping her feet from her *geta* straps, she leaves these two wooden sandal things on the concrete lower level, and steps up on to the little wooden sort of platform which forms the house entrance. As there is a passage inside, with its polished wooden floor, she is offered a pair of heelless slippers, in which she flaps along, leaving them in the passage as she enters any room. There is, of course, no doorway; such things are unnecessary; the dividing partitions serve the same purpose. You simply slide one of them back, step through, and slide the screen to again.

There is some repetition of compliments and formal greetings as the hostess shows her guest into one of the rooms. A maidservant flutters in with a couple more floor

<sup>1</sup> "Your honourable pardon, please!"

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cushions, and presently the two ladies are seated on them, or, rather, kneeling on them, and squatting more or less on their heels. Accustomed as they are to it, they could stay like that for hours if need be; their ancestors have been squatting like that for hundreds or thousands of years, but it would give us pins and needles or worse agonies inside a few minutes.

The first, and last, thing that strikes us in our invisible watch is the complete absence of what we should call furniture. In the middle of the floor there is an elegant little bronze affair something like an ornamental flower-pot. It is nearly filled with a grey, dusty-looking ash, on top of which are a few small pieces of charcoal, smouldering a dull and not very hopeful sort of red, and so gradually joining the ash on which they are laid. This is the *hibachi*, the customary, and often the only, means of warming in a Japanese house. Besides this and the cushions on which the ladies are seated there is not a single object on the whole of this expanse of smooth, straw-coloured matting, intersected with the black tape edging already described. We count twelve mats, by the way—a fairly good-sized room, almost equivalent to fifteen feet square.

One of the *fusuma* is slid back by an unseen hand, and the maid appears again in the passage, kneeling on the floor, bowing repeatedly, and shoving a little tea-tray along in front of her. Rising no further than a crouching position, she comes in, draws the screen to behind her, and carries the tray across to her mistress, laying it daintily on the floor in front of her, with more bowing before she retires the way she came. Presently in she comes again, this time with a little pan of charcoal, with which she replenishes the *hibachi*, handling the stuff with a pair of metal

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chopsticks, and never letting it touch anything else. On a little tripod over the glowing charcoal she places a tiny brass kettle, pushes the *hibachi* over to join the tea-tray on the floor by her mistress, and with farther bows retires from sight.

The tea-tray and its contents are in keeping with the simplicity of the surroundings. The tray itself is of fine-quality lacquer, its highly polished black surface adorned with a single flower painted in one corner. The tiny teapot, looking but half the size of an English breakfast cup, is of plain pottery, a dull, rough brown, with glaze run over only part of the upper surface. Its round stem handle is on the side at right angles to the spout, so the action of pouring is like that of a little saucepan. Some teapots have a loop of plaited bamboo, like a kettle handle over the top, but never a handle at the back, opposite to the spout. The tea inside looks like nothing so much as some bits of dried grass floating on hot water. This green tea is not by any means the same as Chinese tea, for the Japanese variety is of a rather bitter taste. It is, of course, drunk just as it is, without milk and sugar; it is only queer Westerners who would make such a messy concoction of so many ingredients.

Mrs Yamazaki pours tea into the tiny cups. They have no handles, and they stand in small oval saucers of polished wood. She hands one to her guest, who takes it with the usual gesture, using both hands, as if it were a large bowl of great value. They both sip the pale green liquid, and daintily nibble little cakes of rice-paste, very sweet but of no particular taste, from a lacquered box which matches the tray.

The two ladies exchange polite conversation, always on



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the look-out for any microscopic flaws in the appearance or bearing of the dear friend opposite. The scope expands to matters of local gossip, and while they are indulging in this world-wide pastime we will take another look at our immediate surroundings.

The square emptiness of the whole room, surrounded by paper screens, with the light filtering through the window panels in their lattice-work of slender wooden bars, gives us the impression of being in a big lantern or a birdcage. The effect is increased by the appearance of some lovely birds painted on the sliding screens which divide this room from the next. The main feature of decoration, however, is on the opposite side of the room, where a plaster wall gives some idea of slightly greater solidarity. Into this wall, as in any Japanese room of this kind, is built a sort of alcove, anything up to about the size of a *tatami* in width and depth, and running the whole height of the room from floor to ceiling, except that the bottom of it is raised just a few inches above the room floor-level. This *tokonoma*, as it is called, has its origin explained in various ways. Some say that it used to be a sleeping-place; others describe it as the spot always sacredly reserved for the Emperor, if he should ever deign to honour the dwelling of his loyal subject with his presence.

In any case, this alcove is never used like the rest of the room, but is kept apart for its few simple decorations. On its back wall hangs one of the *kakemono*, a long vertical picture or inscription in classical writing, the paper being mounted on a silk background, with plain wooden rollers at top and bottom. The picture is most often a landscape, done according to Oriental rules of perspective, which are unintelligible to mere Western eyes. And if we were to

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ask for the meaning of a classical inscription we should most likely be informed that it was far too classical and cultured to be explained.

On the raised floor of the *tokonoma* stands a low tray-like table, with a vase of flowers, arranged according to one of certain styles. It is no mere bunch of flowers shoved into the narrow neck of the receptacle, or even what might go by the name of a tasteful bouquet at a European florist's. It is a much more exacting and complicated business, every stem, twig, and leaf being bent into one harmonious whole. The group we are looking at shows three levels, symbolizing heaven above, earth beneath, and man hovering 'twixt the two. Grouping often takes a triple form; on the other hand, fours of any kind are strictly avoided wherever possible in all walks of life, because the word for 'four' has the sound *shi*, the same as the word for 'death,' although the written signs are quite different. It would never do, for example, to give anyone a present consisting of four of anything. That would be pretty well the same as wishing him dead and out of the way. Similarly, one must never send flowers to a sick person, as floral gifts are the custom only after death.

The various styles of flower arrangement for the decoration of the *tokonoma* have their own adherents and qualified teachers who have been strictly trained in the arts and traditions of their own particular school. The same applies to the ceremony of making and drinking tea, with its intricate technique of movements and procedure, all rigidly prescribed according to rules. Such ornamental accomplishments are further relics of bygone feudal ages, when every detail of daily life was controlled with an even stricter formality than that of to-day. Like elegant idlers

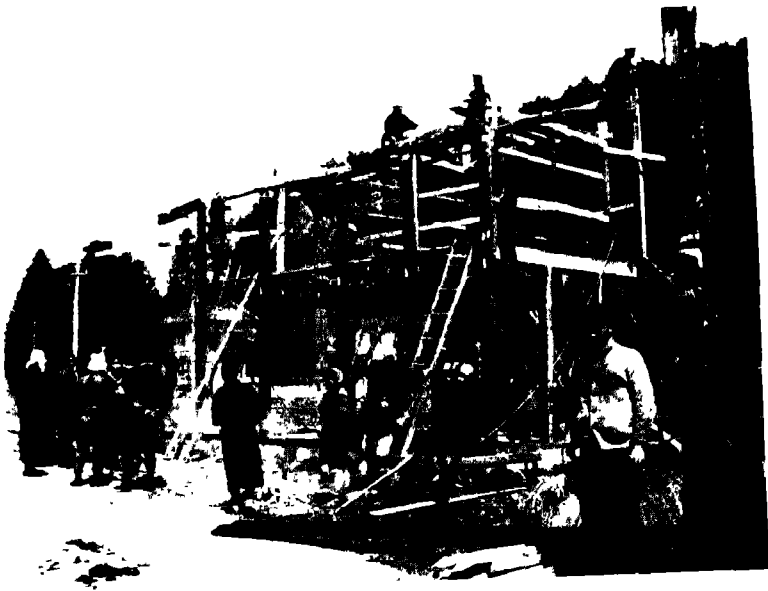
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of every age and clime, lords and ladies sought relief from utter boredom in the practice of meticulous social ritual. Among more modern attractions and distractions these ancient arts are disappearing now, and their passing is mourned by devout nationalists as a sign of racial decay.

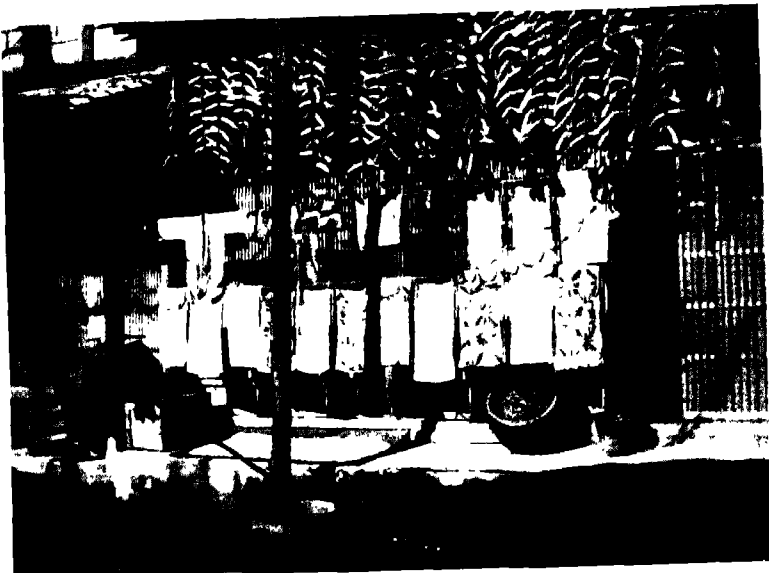
Meanwhile Mrs Yamazaki and her guest have continued their chatting and sipping. The tiny teapot has been replenished with hot water from the Lilliputian kettle over the charcoal. This is no regular afternoon tea-time, by the way. Whenever a visitor arrives etiquette requires that tea shall be served. At a restaurant or hotel, or even in a shop, it is often placed before clients as a matter of course before any order is given. Naturally there are grades of tea to suit all occasions.

Her visit now being over, Mrs Okamoto begins to take her leave, with the customary farewells in conventional phrases. She thanks her hostess for her great hospitality, and apologizes profusely for the enormous trouble caused. The lady of the house perforce replies that it has been no trouble at all, and would her distinguished guest kindly honour once again this miserable shack with a visit. As they go bobbing and backing to the front door let us take advantage of our invisible incognito to have a further look at this interesting abode, and then houses in general.

We shall find all the living-rooms of the same austere plainness. Almost any of them could be used for all purposes—sleeping, taking meals, working, resting. Big cupboards built into the side of the room, and provided with the universal sliding doors, contain the *futon*, the large, thick quilts padded with cotton wadding, which are spread on the floor at night. People sleep in between the



HOUSE-BUILDING



A HOUSE-FRONT, WITH WASHING AND "DAIKON" HUNG UP  
TO DRY

IN A JAPANESE ROOM  
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layers, one or more above and below. Square, cushion-like pillows are often used, but women save their elaborate hairdressing from disarrangement by resting the neck on a pad which is raised to the requisite level by a little wooden stand, like a miniature model of a headsman's block.

In cold weather a small square of *tatami* is lifted from the centre of the floor, exposing an iron bowl fitted into the boarding beneath. Burning charcoal is put into this receptacle, a wire cage is placed over it, and on top of that are laid the ends of the *futon*. The members of the family sleep with feet inward to the warmth, each form, as it were, the spoke of a wheel without any rim. In winter a *futon* or so may be left like this for anyone who wants a cosy rest during the day, but at ordinary times all the bedding is taken up and cleared away into the cavernous cupboards, the floor being left quite clear from morn till evening.

At meal-times people squat on floor cushions or recline on the floor matting itself, and take their food from small bowls and dishes placed on lacquered wooden trays or tables only a few inches high. Ordinarily there are no knives, forks, or spoons; every one does very well with the famous chopsticks, which, by the way, are not held one in each hand, as sometimes imagined, but both in one hand, usually the right. The action of chopsticks, like that of *geta* and other Oriental implements, must be seen to be understood. Their use is not at all difficult after some patient practice; Japanese food is sliced or minced before being served, so that it is only necessary to pick it up bit by bit and transfer it to the mouth.

Breakfast is a very slight meal, consisting perhaps of some soup, drunk from a little bowl, some boiled rice with

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a bit of pickled vegetable, and the indispensable green tea. Curiously enough, even foreigners who are quite accustomed to Japanese food find difficulty in facing it on an empty stomach in the morning.

The midday meal almost invariably consists of *bento*—a small boxful of cold boiled rice, with the addition of a few pieces of cooked fish, seaweed, boiled or pickled vegetables, or other items, in small slices. This lunch-box is made of a cheap white metal, and has a loose-fitting lid. The chopsticks are fitted into a slide on top of it, or kept in a separate container something like a pencil-box. As the *bento*-box is rather too large to go into a pocket it is carried in the hand, and usually wrapped up in a thin cotton cloth. It is a most familiar sight; every morning it can be seen in hundreds and thousands being carried by work-people, clerks, school-children, and others. Lunch is usually taken at one's place of occupation. Round about noon, at a pause on the job, in an interval between classes, out come the little boxes and the chopsticks, and in a few minutes the whole ration has been shovelled down out of sight.

The chief meal of the day is taken at home in the evening. It usually has more variety, depending on family circumstances. Soup, of different kinds, fish, mushroom, chicken, lotus root, bamboo shoot and other local vegetables are the commonest articles of diet. These are always served in small quantities, though there may be many items at one meal. There is something daintily attractive in the appearance of all the little bowls and dishes on the lacquer trays. Compared with European or Chinese food, however, Japanese dishes are insipid; they seem to have had all the life and taste boiled out of them. It is not surprising that pungent sauces are freely used, both with native food and

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with the imitations of foreign dishes that are found in restaurants everywhere.

The bulk of a meal is always made up of rice, which is boiled in absolutely plain water, without the addition of anything to give it flavour. It is dried in a certain way which leaves it readily manageable with chopsticks, on the ends of which it is rapidly piled and pushed into the mouth, to be swallowed as quickly. A small wooden tub of boiled rice is always at hand to replenish the supply. Foreigners can rarely manage to consume much of it, but a Japanese does not consider he has had a meal till he has swallowed several bowlfuls. A European meal he considers as lacking in bulk, which he may find necessary to make up by means of a quantity of boiled rice afterwards.

The haste with which food is bolted down may be followed by a rush back to whatever occupation has been interrupted or by a more ruminative interval. An indispensable adjunct at this stage is a supply of toothpicks, useful little gadgets often to be seen in packets aptly labelled "Our Country's Pride." With one or more of these every dental interstice and cavity is thoroughly explored. There is a wide display of incisors, canines, and bicuspid, or the whole oral entrance may be blocked by the hand probing for a molar far in the interior. The scavenging operations are seconded by vigorous swilling with tea, and by the forced draught of indrawn breath sucked sharply through the teeth. Hoarse scrapings indicate the exhaustive cleansing of the pharynx. It is a mark of politeness to express gastronomic enjoyment by sundry hissings and gurglings during the meal itself, as by rumblings and eructations from the nether regions when the digestive process is well begun. For half an hour or more one may get entertainment



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of this sort. The prandial habits of Nippon are verily hard to be appreciated by an outsider's eye and ear.

As a sign of progressiveness a well-to-do householder sometimes has one room in the house fitted with an ordinary board floor and furnished in imitation of foreign styles. Even when there is no European room in the house chairs and tables are sometimes used, of very sketchy make, and provided with little rubber pads over the feet, to protect the *tatami*. Such furniture, however, is by far the exception. Home life is spent mainly on the floor. In most houses there is an increasing series of youngsters, some of whom need to do a certain amount of reading and writing. This also can be done on the floor itself, but the growing pupil or student is usually granted the dignity of a table, less than a foot high, and a little set of bookshelves.

As work is usually done so near the floor, the electric lights are, of course, not fixed up near the ceiling. Each lamp is provided with a great length of cord, on to which are fitted two sliding hooks, so that the light can be adjusted to different heights and distances. Electric light often appears very strange among such primitive surroundings; many a time it is the only foreign feature to be seen in a room, or even a public hall. Its widespread use in Japan is due to the abundant rainfall and the water-power obtainable from the mountain streams. In the transition from the old paper lanterns gas-lighting was never much used, owing partly to the unsuitability of the country's coal, partly to the risk from broken pipes in time of earthquake. In view of the prevalent tendency to suicide among the Japanese the absence of a gas-supply seems an advantage.

The electricity companies supply each house with a

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stated number of electric globes, mostly of low candle-power. When one of these gives out it is taken back to the company's office and exchanged for a new one. There is rarely any meter to register the current used, but a flat monthly rate is charged. As neither saving nor wasting makes any difference to this charge, therefore, householders are in the habit of leaving lights on all night. This is thought to be a protection against the numerous burglars, but it also serves to facilitate the movements of the privileged rats that infest the houses.

Electric fittings stay as they are put; menfolk never condescend to make themselves handy-men in any line whatever. Moreover, such matters are strictly in the hands of the electric company's officials, who enjoy the awe accorded by the humble populace to anything in uniform. Especially during a thunderstorm, or in the middle of a public meeting, the current may be switched off to remind every one of those in authority at the controls, and of their watchful care of the public welfare.

Practical details such as industrial training being still so unfashionable in Japan, some of these imperious electricians show a surprising and peculiar technique. One often thinks that their only claim to the name of electrician is their wearing of a uniform.

Some Americans who arrived in a Japanese city with an electric iron, a hair-curler, a toaster, and a waffle-iron furnished the power company with a problem that has never yet been solved. In foreign-style buildings switches are often placed behind doors or omitted altogether; fuses are arranged in the roof, or are non-existent. Lamps are hung away up near lofty ceilings or low enough to catch one's head. A thick super-insulation may be added where

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the installation is open and visible, but omitted where the wire passes through a hole in a wooden beam or a plaster wall.

When we had an electric heater fitted, apparently the first of its kind in the district, a separate power cable was brought round to follow the route of the lighting wires, a *détour* of several hundred yards, instead of direct from a main-road line close at hand. Half a dozen men pottered about the house for several days. When the current came through at last they showed the most childish delight and surprise, and proposed to spend the rest of the day squatting round the heater on the floor, warming their hands, smoking congratulatory cigarettes, and discussing the great achievement. After a preliminary trial a high official installed the meter, but made a false joint, which was promptly detected and put right by the emergency man, a very capable fellow, who was sent in answer to our call.

Electrical devices have become more and more common, filling shop-windows with a shining array, but their internal reliability is another matter. Dealers actually recommend foreign-made articles of greater durability. Rough, unlit roads make the carrying of a flash lamp advisable, and if the American Ever-ready is unobtainable the Japanese imitation is there to hand, complete even to the trade-mark. Its limp metal case and uncertain connexions give one ample practice in adjustment; both globe and battery are a sporting chance: they may last several days, weeks, or hours.

### 6. HOUSEWORK

One of the most admirable features about a Japanese house is the complete absence of over-ornamentation. Flower-vases, *kakemono*, and other decorative articles are

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stored out of sight, and brought out one or two at a time as occasion demands—a tasteful custom which could well be imitated in many an English drawing-room. Indeed, Western housewives might be charmed with the beautiful simplicity of a Japanese interior, though very different feelings would be aroused by a glimpse ever so slightly below the polished surface. The floor *tatami*, which look so sleek and easy to clean, are actually a happy hunting-ground of domestic insects and a trap for the dust. Lift one of these *tatami* and you will see the accumulation of dust on the matchwood boarding underneath. Not that the floor mats or any other furnishings are often so rudely disturbed. General house-cleaning is undertaken only twice a year, when, by order of the police, the *tatami* are taken outside and tapped with a cane; other objects are flicked with a duster, and the woodwork is wiped down with a damp cloth. On the day of this Great Cleaning, as it is called, the sides of the streets are lined with *tatami*, propped up against house-fronts, and a miscellany of objects turned out for a few hours' airing. Then everything is put back again, and the all-important policemen go round from house to house, attaching to the doorpost a paper label certifying that the cleaning business has been done for the current six months. For the rest, routine house-cleaning mostly consists of a flick with a rag whisk, usually at the same unearthly hour of the morning as the banging of the sliding wooden shutters. After such an impressive early start to the housework many women spend a whole lot of the day just hanging about, usually jogging the latest baby, slung in a capacious cloak on the back.

Even before we had time to settle in our Japanese house on our first arrival we had an experience vividly illustrating

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comparative standards of cleanliness, not to mention roundabout Oriental procedure. About the only household necessity that we had not brought 'up the line' with us was paraffin, for the trusty primus stoves on which we were to depend for cooking. We had been assured that we could get this on the spot, and as soon as we mentioned it to a helpful Japanese colleague he went off into a discussion on the relative connotation of the terms 'paraffin,' 'petrol,' 'petroleum,' 'benzine,' 'kerosene,' 'coal-oil,' 'rock-oil,' and other oleaginous products. We showed him the word 'paraffin' in an English-Japanese dictionary, but he maintained that the equivalent indicated in his own language was not the thing we wanted.

He and I set out on an exploratory tour of likely shops, a jaunt which once and for all gave me a good general idea of local topography, but which produced no paraffin. Again and again my guide approached still another oil-dealer's establishment; there was the usual exchange of bowing and preliminary compliments, then a lengthy consultation on a wide range of subjects, always with the same result: no paraffin here. The morning got hotter, the crowd of inquisitive children and grown-ups grew bigger. For the fiftieth time I mentioned that a sniff or two at any opened cans would enable me to identify the desired commodity, but this prosaic suggestion was not allowed to interrupt the flow of rhetoric. In the end I left them to it; a good time was enjoyed by all, and soon afterwards my wife and I discovered for ourselves that paraffin was obtainable from any of the dozen shops into and out of which I had been so conscientiously steered.

During our absence from the house on that first expedition the baggage-delivery man brought our trunks and

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cases along from the station, and dumped them on the side veranda, with baneful results to its polished surface. Our landlord, who lived close by, telephoned to the college, where a clerk passed the message on to an office-boy, who communicated it to one of the staff, who telephoned back to a student neighbour of ours, who finally informed us of our landlord's displeasure, and of that gentleman's polite and gratuitous innuendo that he was afraid he could hardly expect these foreigners to keep the house clean, as Japanese would do. We never heard whether he got our full reply: that, while we deplored the scratching of his veranda, the responsibility lay entirely with certain of his fellow-countrymen; also, that we regretfully disagreed with his ideas of what constituted cleanliness. By an ironical coincidence his message arrived just at the moment when we were removing the worst of the filth from kitchen and bathroom, where, according to custom, it had reposed for years. The fact that the foreign husband was taking part in this uncalled-for upheaval still further enhanced our reputation for Occidental madness.

The fittings of a kitchen are as simple as might be expected. Cooking is done over a pan of charcoal, or perhaps on a coal-fire, though an oven or a range is unknown. For washing there is a shallow wooden trough lined with zinc; a hand-pump of wood or iron raises water from the well under the floor. Sometimes a wooden or metal pipe carries water from the pump to the bathroom, next to the kitchen. Here once more we meet a contrivance peculiar to the country—the Japanese bath. It is usually a wooden tub, a couple of feet wide and anything up to about three feet deep, with a wooden lid that can be taken right off. Charcoal or coal is burned in a tiny iron grate which is

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actually let into one side of the tub, near the bottom, and contact with the heated metal surfaces rapidly raises the temperature of the water. It would be considered very dirty to use soap in this bath; all washing and rinsing must be done in a smaller tub beforehand; then the bather climbs into the big tub, and squats in it as long as desired, immersed to the neck in hot water that would scald a European.

Water from the kitchen sink runs off through a tin or wooden pipe into an open gutter outside, where it is joined by other drainage. The bath water is let out by the drawing of a wooden plug, and floods over the concrete floor, escaping by a hole in the wall. Such apertures offer easy access by night to the rats. There are no S-bends, airlocks, or other precautions; in fact, drainage of any description is extremely sketchy. Waste water, as already mentioned, finds its way along open gutters, or perhaps just floods over any open space near the houses. Sometimes it filters back into the well, in an economic circle of perpetual motion.

The disposal of human sewage is even more primitive. The Honourable Place of Convenience is usually an uncovered hole in the floor in one part of the house, with a tank of concrete or beaten earth below it. (Here again is a recognized means of ingress for burglars.) At intervals the contents of the tank are ladled out into small wooden tubs, which are then carried away on handcarts to wherever this useful material is required as fertilizer in the rice-fields outside the town. Such utilization of waste products is another instance of perpetual motion in economic circles. The 'honey-carts,' as they are facetiously termed by foreign residents, can be seen at any time of the day, singly or in

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procession, even in the biggest towns, though in Tokyo they have got as far as using bigger wagons drawn by bullocks. In any case or place these odorous vehicles are quite accepted by the inhabitants as part of daily life. School-children, even frock-coated, modernized gentlemen, walk along beside them without noticing them. Sometimes one of the wooden tubs is omitted from the handcart to make room for some vegetables, or perhaps a basket containing the latest baby.

In the absence of water-supply and drainage any system of flushing sewage is obviously impossible. And when some Americans wanted to have a special tank fitted in the grounds of their house, for the chemical treatment and absorption of sewage, the authorities refused to permit this insanitary foreign contrivance. Even in those parts of the bigger towns where there is a water-supply with pipes and taps many people continue to use the shallow surface wells, to save paying monthly charges. Large numbers of houses have not even a well, but must fetch water from a single pump that supplies the whole street or quarter. It is interesting to notice that the Japanese language has no word for 'plumber.' The artisan who deals with taps and things nowadays is vaguely and variously referred to as the 'pump-man,' the 'pipe-wallah,' and the 'tinsmith.'

As many houses do not possess a bath of their own, the occupants must go to the local bath-house for their daily soak in hot water. The public wash-house is an indispensable institution; when a new part of a town is going to be developed one of the first signs may be the erection of the wooden, double-winged building with the tall tin chimney, and with the Sino-Japanese characters for 'Men' and



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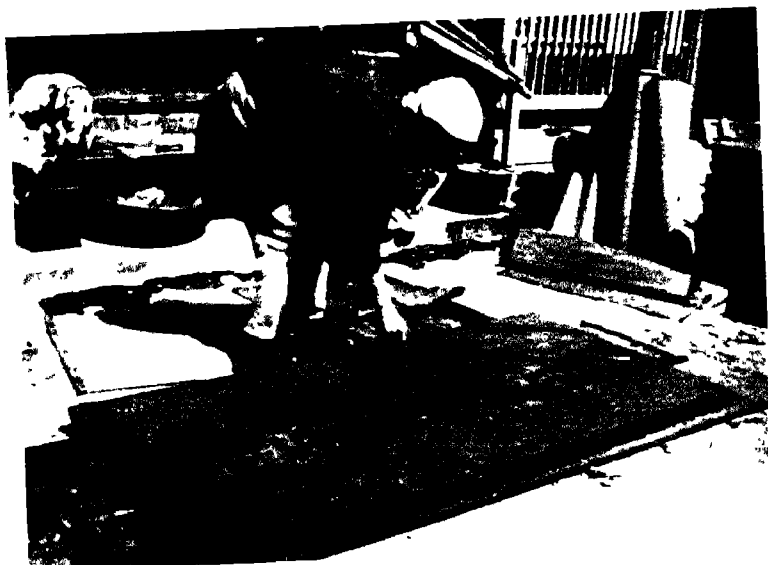
'Women' inscribed on the respective doors. The two labels on the separate entrances conform with official regulations, though the distinction does not necessarily extend to the interior of the bath-house itself.

Especially during the afternoon, people can be seen making their way to and from the bath-house, carrying soap and other requisites in a little tin basket, as well as the tiny cotton towels with which they dab themselves dry. Squatting in the big common bath, they exchange current gossip and a variety of contagious diseases. Foreign residents are careful to warn newcomers against the chance of infection. Once, and only once, I risked a dip in the single bath at a Japanese hotel. It looked so inviting after a long and dusty hike. The penalty was a skin complaint that took months to get rid of. Rather similar was the experience of another European, who caught barber's rash and a scalp affection at two consecutive visits to a hair-dresser's.

Let us not ask how often the water is changed in a public or a private bath. Let us not inquire too closely into the state of underclothing, put on again and again after periodical bathing. When clothes are washed, as must happen sometimes, the washing is often done in a stream which serves also as a town drain, flowing through street or countryside, garnished with floating rubbish and a bedding of old pots and cans, vegetable refuse, and stagnant mud. Japan is at least ahead of countries such as China and Egypt, where streams and canals are made to serve the triple purpose of waterway, drainage, and water-supply.



III - IV



CLEANING THE TAIAMI



HOUSE-CLEANING

## CHAPTER III .

### *Health*

#### 1. T.B.

TROPICAL origins and characteristics are most strikingly suggested by the appearance and deportment of the Japanese during their sweltering summer. Shedding one garment after another, wherever possible, they go about in the scantiest of clothing, a good bit on the way back to nature. They even lose much of their restless jerkiness in favour of a more seasonable languor, and altogether appear to be much more at home in hot weather.

During the hottest summer months foreign residents find it practically imperative to go up to cool mountain resorts, not only to enjoy a little more white society than they have in their tiny scattered communities for the rest of the year, but also to escape the steamy heat of the coastal plain, some of the vilest weather to be found in any country laying claim to civilization. At times white people try the experiment of staying down on the plains, but they usually find it a false economy, to be counterbalanced by ill-health and medical expenses. The precaution of getting away from the heat is, of course, regarded as a further ground for jealousy towards the presumably wealthy foreigners—in contrast with the poor Japanese. It is, however, partly a case of means applied in different directions. At any time during the year the Japanese themselves are constantly breaking off work for a trip to some distant part of the islands—on a tour of inspection,

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or to bury a deceased relative, or just to visit a live one.

Within a short distance of where we lived at Nakamichi there was a lovely little seaside resort where we often liked to spend an afternoon or so at the week-end. The sandy beach and shady groves we usually had to ourselves. It is the custom for native visitors to make straight for the little wood-built hotels and rest-houses, where they first have a hot bath and then lounge on the matted floor, sipping tea, smoking, and talking.

During their holidays, if any, and especially in the most torrid weather, the Japanese like to stay as long as possible at one of the numerous hot-spring resorts, where, just contrary to our idea of cooling off, they pass a lot of their time squatting up to the neck in scalding water. These natural hot springs are some of the most curious features of these volcanic islands. In certain regions the whole surface of the earth seems to be merely a thin crust, under which all sorts of strange things are going on. Where steam jets from the ground pans of food are cooked on this central heating free of cost. Great pools bubble and swirl in various colours, and are hot enough to boil eggs or vegetables, or to provide a quick and certain end to the many people who have a fascination to close their life in these weird surroundings.

Even foreigners living in these hot-water regions have their own little spa built in the garden, and visitors are often greeted on arrival with the invitation to have a hot bath. A friend of ours was being visited by his father, over from the home country and on a trip round the world. At one of the town hot springs the elderly gentleman inadvertently got left behind by the party, and was found,

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still sitting up to the neck in the usual fashion in the hot water, sharing the large tank with a number of local dusky damsels, without a trace of embarrassment on either side. At these mineral-spring resorts, by the way, the medicinal nature of the water and the changing of it caused by the constant flow obviate the risk of infection that is to be incurred at the ordinary public bath-houses.

If the Japanese look most comfortable in the broiling summer, when they go about in the lightest of *kimono*, they certainly touch the far extreme of discomfort in the rigours of winter. In their southern islands, where the summer is most tropical, the winter can be mild and pleasant, but in many parts of the country the inclement weather immobilizes a large proportion of the population, this of itself being a considerable hardship to people who are for ever scurrying about.

The peasants have no field work to do; they stay indoors, plaiting baskets, hats, and other articles of straw and bamboo, or attending to their primitive agricultural implements. Traffic on country roads is impossible; outlying villages and townships resign themselves to isolation in the heavy snow. As we have already seen, the railways, telegraphs, and other means of communication wage their unending struggle against natural disasters—blizzards in winter, floods in summer, with every chance of earthquakes at any time.

Snowstorms, like typhoons and other disturbances, often run in three-day cycles. Even in the towns little or no effort is made to clear the streets before the storm ends. In the main thoroughfares a central trench is cut down to the ground level for the passage of pedestrians and any vehicle that can scrape through. On both sides of the

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street there are great piles of snow, miserable stuff, not clear and crisp, but dull and moist, as if undecided whether to disappear or stay, in this bleak temperature which is neither mildly warm nor sharply cold.

Passages are cut through to the doors of shops and houses. Every now and then people scrape at the piled-up heaps with shovels, and scatter the snow over the roadway, to be trodden away, churned into a dismal slush, run into the open drains, or otherwise dissipated. In streets where no clearing is undertaken the snow remains as it falls, only getting dirtier and slushier as the days go by. Messengers with handcarts from the centre of the town find themselves pulled up in streets farther out; peasants bringing their sledges in from the country find them useless on the roads that have been cleared in town.

Wherever the snow is left the passing of many pedestrians wears a single track which meanders along more or less in the middle of the roadway. There is a hardened core of trodden snow underneath this track, but it is very narrow, and its upper surface is worn convex by the scraping of many *geta*, so that at every step one is liable to slip sideways into deeper and softer snow. It never occurs to people to widen the track. Even where hundreds of pedestrians are using the street they can be seen shuffling along in an endless single file, jolting and stumbling whenever others pass in the opposite direction on this narrow, slippery ridge. In this way, as in so many others, they show the racial lack of initiative, their fondness for plodding along one after the other, their amazing acquiescence in avoidable discomforts.

As already mentioned, we wasted a good deal of sympathy on people who did not realize how miserably cold

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they were—often bare-legged on their wooden *geta*, splashing through the slushy snow, huddled up in their cotton garments. As in China, the old style of winter clothing is padded with cotton wadding, cheap to make, but soon deteriorating into a matted and unwashable mess. Wool was little used when we first went to Japan, but in recent years it has been much more in evidence. With a liberal admixture of cotton it is made into thick, clumsy material, which adds to the stumpy appearance of native trunks and limbs. In our staff-room one wintry morning, when the lecturer in Finance, partially naked and totally unashamed, was going through the process of loosening his garments for more comfortable adjustment, we counted five layers of thick woollen clothing beneath his foreign-style lounge suit.

A job of any sort in an official building is a great advantage, because heating is done at the Government's expense. Usually the heat originates from a little cast-iron stove in the middle of the room. Yards and yards of tin piping lead out of it, bending and hanging overhead, before finding its way to the requisite hole in the wall. These wretched little contrivances smoke fiercely whenever opened for stoking, as well as at other unexpected times. Our college was considered a special paradise, because it was one of the very few local buildings fitted with central heating. In addition, places such as the staff-room were provided with the indispensable *hibachi* of glowing charcoal in the centre. The gregarious Nipponese must always have a rallying-point of this kind. A chorus on a concert platform hates to stand in a straight line, but would rather form a cluster or a circle, leaving some of the performers with their backs to the audience. Baseball and football players readily adopt the American idea of 'going into a



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huddle,' bunched together with their heads down, discussing tactics before or during a game. Diffident guests at a party will gladly bend their heads over a photo album, a magazine or other object which saves them from being individuals. Japanese people anywhere will gather in consultation over anything whatever. And so our worthy colleagues sat round that staff-room *hibachi*, smoking cigarettes, sipping tea, and interminably discussing anything and everything, hour after hour, even in the summer months, but much more often in winter, when, as many of them said, it was pleasanter to stay in such a well-warmed room than to go off to the bleak chilliness of their own houses.

Charcoal has for ages been the staple fuel of Japan. For the great majority it is still the chief means of cooking and warming. In cold weather people spend a great deal of time squatting on the floor by the *hibachi*, their fingers dangling over the faint and fluctuating warmth from the smouldering pieces. From this more or less cosy position they are unwilling to budge—if their occupation allows them the luxury of so much inaction. Officials, clerks, and even shopkeepers show the greatest reluctance to quit the *hibachi* long enough to attend to any business. It is not only on country roads, therefore, but also inside town buildings, that winter immobilizes a large proportion of the population.

This old-fashioned fuel, though it is a feeble means of giving warmth, provides an added hygienic problem. The fumes arising from burning charcoal, especially in rooms unventilated except by draughts through screens or floor, have a bad effect on the eyes, on the breathing organs, and on the general health. Even the most casual visitor

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could hardly fail to notice the prevalence of respiratory diseases among the Japanese. Especially during cold weather, catarrh is chronic and widespread. To speak pathologically, mucus is a copious national product; here indeed is a land of great expectorations. At the same time, one has to be careful to distinguish between the two types of expectorator. There is the intense nationalist, most common among the younger *intelligentsia*, who expresses his feeling of superiority by spitting when he sees a foreigner, and then there are the ordinary people who spit through physiological habit or necessity—at any time or place. In any building of public status spittoons are provided at suitable points. These are, of course, cleansed from time to time, but in a bucket of cold water. Incredible though it may seem, it is not uncommon to see a caretaker using the same bucket to wash people's rice-bowls in after the midday meal.

In such an island country, with the sea never very far away, it seems curious that medical men should accuse the atmosphere of lacking ozone, and of being predisposing to chest complaints in both Japanese and Europeans. Many foreign residents are threatened with the dreaded tuberculosis, and recover only by the most careful measures taken in good time. The Japanese themselves, however, shut themselves up and abandon hope. At the best of times they have no great love for fresh air indoors, especially at night. With both inner and outer screens completely closed all round, and charcoal burning for warmth, the air inside a house gets pretty well used up. Even in schools and colleges built more or less in imitation of Western plans the windows are not only perpetually closed, but also unopenable, owing to unrepaired breakages

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of fittings and fastenings. On the other hand, it is most likely that the doors will not shut—for the same reason. And if a foreign teacher shows a peculiar desire for fresh air his students may playfully leave the door wide open and force or break open a window right opposite his desk—usually on a bitterly cold day.

Poor diet is said to be another cause of prevalent T.B. When one thinks of the meagre-looking food of the great majority, the few scanty vegetables and bits of fish, the everlasting, cheerless rice and the digestive troubles it brings, one is amazed at the enormous amount of heavy physical labour done by working people, the cramming for examinations among adolescents. These long-drawn-out mental efforts, in fact, are cited as further causes of ill-health among young fellows and girls of the student class. To begin with, the official retention of the archaic Chinese characters in the Japanese written language throws an increased burden on the young learners, and lengthens every period of school life to an extent unknown in other countries. Most children finish with the primary school at about fourteen, but those who go on to secondary school do not leave it till they are nearly twenty, after which there is a further intermediate course of three years before they can start at a university. During all these years growing youths wear the military-style uniform, which, like military training, is compulsory in secondary schools and colleges. Family circumstances are often such that a boy starting at school is supplied by his parents with a uniform of the cheapest cotton material. This he wears all day and every day, even year after year, long after it has become pathetically shabby and far too small for him. Whereas one practically never sees a ragged *kimono*, the sight of hundreds

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of youngsters in scraggy cotton uniforms, of a faded blue or mottled grey, or yellowish khaki in the latest patriotic fashion, many of them out at the elbows and knees, frayed and shrunk at wrists and ankles, makes one wish that schoolboys and students could be allowed to go back to the more suitable *kimono*. It is noticeable that when a boy or a man feels ill he temporarily discards his foreign-style suit for the more comfortable native garb, just as he does every evening when he gets home to squat on the accustomed floor. Even the newest and smartest of school uniforms offer little protection to the body, and in any case the close-fitting tunic cramps the chest, still further increasing the chance of consumption.

The first sign that a student is attacked by this dread disease is usually that he wears a bandage round the throat. Then one notices that he is absent more and more frequently and for longer intervals, and one can imagine him at last shutting himself up in some airless room at home, despairingly awaiting the end. Some months later the announcement goes up on the notice-board: another student dead. Foreign women working in girls' schools, many of which are run by missionaries, find it more than pathetic to look over a class and be able to pick out certain individuals who are doomed, and even to make a pretty good estimate of the time still to go before each victim dies—of consumption.

Naturally it is some of the hardest-working students who go down with T.B., though the sportsmen are not exempt. Athletics are still practised only by a minority, and even in these cases they may be an added strain—to poorly fed youths engaged on so much bookwork. Our inside-left one season used to retire during a match, owing to chest trouble. Another year our goalkeeper ~~had to drop out of~~

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the college course; he resumed six months later, but was finally obliged to give up his studies altogether. Our Vice-Principal, a very fine fellow, showed the ominous signs of the throat bandage and frequent absences. I went to visit him during his illness; he was cooped up in a room at home, with every breath of fresh air excluded, until at last he died.

A foreigner in Japan naturally thinks of ways and means to prevent such a loss of young and useful life, but any query on the subject is likely to be resented rather than appreciated or even understood by his colleagues. One can never get quite used to the high rate of mortality, or the apathy with which this and kindred matters are regarded. "*Shikata ga nai!*" After all, in this very crowded country, every dead citizen leaves a little more room for his fellows. The sanctity of human life is a Western sociological embellishment finding little favour among Orientals, even those who are outwardly a little Europeanized. Disastrous accidents and public dangers which would raise a storm of protest in many countries pass more or less unnoticed here. Once when several hundred lives had been lost in a colliery very few people seemed to have heard of the catastrophe. Academic gentlemen, dignified in their position as leaders of national thought, did not even know if mines were worked by vertical shafts or sloping tunnels. All over the country, in every occupation, unhealthy and dangerous conditions are fatalistically tolerated.

### 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL

If Oriental serenity and inscrutability are largely myths existing chiefly in the imagination of people in distant

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Western countries, Oriental fatalism and apathy, on the other hand, are psychological factors whose power can be understood only by those who have come into close contact with them. They are, of course, related to the extremes of mental exhilaration and depression, which, for example, are so characteristic of the Slavs, and which, therefore, make Russia such an enigma to those who think of it as a European country. And these extremes, in their turn, are akin to the psychological characteristics which divide East from West. Orientals have great difficulty in bringing themselves down to concrete facts; Occidentals are letting themselves in for a whole lot of trouble when they start toying about with vague abstractions.

When one has seen Moslems deliberately crawl away to die, rather than make any effort to preserve their own lives, one is not surprised at curious happenings among other Eastern people. One day in Peking, for example, an American friend of ours became aware of cries of distress from somewhere around, though he could not make out where they came from. Presently he discovered that a man had fallen down a well; passers-by just left him there, and showed the greatest reluctance when asked to help in pulling him out. In any case, Eastern custom often demands that a rescuer shall be responsible for the future maintenance of the person whose life he has saved.

China is the land of "*Mei yu fazul*"<sup>1</sup>—a maxim whose negative influence one sees on every hand in that much-troubled country. It may seem rather strange to meet that similar maxim "*Shikata ga nai*!" in such common use among the Japanese, a people more usually associated with the idea of restless activity. They certainly give the impression

<sup>1</sup> "It can't be done!"

## *Behind the Smile in Real Japan*

of being up and doing, though sometimes they may not be very clear as to what—or how. At times it is nothing but “*Chotto matte!*”<sup>1</sup> At others they appear to be making frantic efforts to achieve the space of half an hour in twenty-nine minutes, and having to come back and pick themselves up.

So far from justifying their claims to imperturbability, the Japanese are about the jumpiest people in the world. In view of their troublous natural surroundings one cannot expect them to be anything else. Their case is similar to the biological theory explaining that dream-sensation of falling which any human beings may have, and waking up just in time. Scientists say that our ancestors who lived in trees and other lofty places often used actually to slip from their perch during sleep. Those who did not wake up in time to grab hold of something just died out. Those who did wake up in time survived, and the racial memory of those occasions has persisted in the form of a dream. Similarly, the Japanese have been living for untold generations in a country where earthquakes may at any moment bring their houses crashing down upon them. In such a case those who do not get outside in the first split-second may not get out at all. It is therefore perfectly natural that the survivors of all those long generations should be ready to jump at the slightest cause. At a cinema, when something is supposed to have gone wrong in the operator's box, one can see the whole crowd scrambling and yelling at the exits in a moment or two.

Passive apathy and restless activity are national characteristics. People who for long have remained most docile suddenly break out as headstrong fanatics. Whether on a

<sup>1</sup> “Please wait a bit!”

## Health

large or on a small scale, however, there is often a considerable gap between plan and execution. The most ambitious projects are floated with the greatest enthusiasm, which soon ebbs away in face of actual difficulties, or merely from loss of interest. And just as these volatile people will fly to untold heights of exaltation, so they plumb the depths of melancholia. It is not surprising, then, that suicide is so common among them. It is carried out for all sorts of reasons, though surely one of the most curious was the one recorded in a farewell letter to the world: "A philosophical disinclination to further existence."

In the old days suicide was a cult of itself, a ceremonial art requiring the most careful attention to traditional rules. Among these sanguinarily-minded warrior people the sword has always been an object of worship, the shining blade has exercised a fascination. The vassal in disgrace with his overlord was sometimes given the opportunity or the command to dispatch himself by *seppuku*, the act of stabbing oneself methodically and thoroughly below the belt, known to Europeans by distant repute under the name of *hara-kiri*. Suicide in any form can also be carried out as a gesture of protest, an attempt to bring disgrace on one's rival or enemy. In the private gardens of Cabinet Ministers and other public men in Tokyo the police often find some prostrate but earnest youth who has given his tummy a fairly good scratch with a kitchen knife, in order to register his disapproval of the nation's foreign policy, the plight of the proletariat, the Washington Treaty, the score against the Japanese Rugby team last week-end at Vancouver, or merely the standard of the exam papers in which he himself has just failed. Strangely enough, the motive given is never that of a desire for publicity, the



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neighbour of ours was amazed at the quantity of *sake* he thought I was imbibing at an official banquet, until he was shown this diplomatic way of putting it out of sight.

Japanese people have at least a full share of that curious attribute which is common to most human beings, prompting them to take an almost morbid interest in the troubles of other folks. And although so many of them seek escape from life in suicide, people generally show an abnormal horror of anything connected with the subject of death. We have already seen how the number four is regarded as sinister, because it has the sound *shi*, the same as the word for death. This number, in fact, is sometimes given an entirely different sound—*yotsu*. Whenever I was giving my students the circumlocutory expressions such as 'passed away,' 'met his death,' 'lost their lives,' in English or other European languages, I soon felt a certain uneasiness and aversion running through the class. During some psychological experiments in London, when a sensitive instrument recorded the reactions of individuals to certain words and ideas, it was not surprising that a Japanese student registered extreme agitation on seeing the word 'death.'

Another common trait is a certain strain of cruelty, which causes distressful misgivings to foreign residents in Japan, although it must be confessed that this unpleasant remnant in human development still survives only too strongly in Western countries. It is all the more surprising because the outward demeanour of so many Japanese gives the impression of gentleness, even kindness. It is no doubt as a contrast to this general demeanour that pugnacious and bullying individuals appear conspicuous. As usual, it seems to be a case of psychological

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compensation. The arrogant nationalists, depressed by the very shadow of almighty America on one side, find satisfaction in their treatment of the weaker Chinese and helpless Koreans on the other. Among the Japanese themselves there is very little apparent inhumanity though a quite different picture may be presented beneath the surface.

People who have heard of the time and care which the Japanese lavish upon plants and flowers are often amazed at their frightful treatment of animals. This practice, however, is not so strange as it may seem. To begin with, Japanese horticulture has sometimes been described as the art of stunting and torturing plants out of all natural form. With animals too their experience has been peculiar. Whether wild or domesticated, animals are relatively few. Although there are great tracts of mountain and forest, hunting is not a common pastime. Truth to tell, there is something ludicrous in the sight of parties of men going out with full equipment of gun, capacious bag, and load of ammunition, and coming back with nothing more than a couple of skinny little birds about the size of sparrows. One of the funniest sights we ever saw anywhere in the world was one of these sportsmen—during the wave of patriotic enthusiasm at the time of the Manchurian conquests. His outfit included a real steel helmet—and no one besides ourselves saw anything strange in that.

Bullocks are used for ploughing in some parts of the level plains. Men and women have always been the chief beasts of burden, though horses are used for pack-carrying among the hills, as well as for ploughing in the muddy rice-fields and drawing the rough four-wheeled carts on town and country roads. These animals are of a small and

## *Behind the Smile in Real Japan*

up a banana on a string, opening a box of nuts, and drinking milk or water out of a bottle. He did not like to be offered anything on the end of a stick; that reminded him too much of the weapons with which other people tormented him, so I left that trick out.

Once again the Japanese visitors in the park were greatly surprised that these queer white people should make friends with such ridiculous little animals as monkeys, whose natural mission they considered to be the butt and victim of all sorts of harassing jokes. Many a time we found the little creatures bruised and bleeding from sticks and stones. On one of the many national festivals we came across a number of young men dressed in the khaki uniform of the patriotic associations. They were having a great time pelting Jacko and Jinny, and generally scaring them out of their wits. Our remonstrances were regarded as coming dangerously near to criticizing military authority—a serious crime in Nippon. Some days afterwards we found Jinny and her little baby monkey dead at the bottom of the cage.

Many visitors to Tokyo remember the zoo elephant who was kept chained so tightly that he could not move in any direction. Then there were the Australian sheep, who arrived in the cold season with heavy fleeces. Came the hot weather, and the authorities did not know that shearing was necessary—sheep are rare in Japan, anyway. Advice from foreigners was disregarded; the unlucky sheep were attacked with a disease that caused their fleeces to drop right off, and in that denuded state they remained, summer and winter. For some offence or other a bear in the zoo was clubbed to death. This is the fate awaiting any dogs who are captured in the periodical round-ups in town

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streets. Some devoted foreign women have founded an S.P.C.A. in Japan—just about as uphill a task as could be imagined. It is all a question of the differences between East and West. Many Orientals have the most scrupulous horror of actually killing anything, even vermin. Unwanted pets are just turned out to die; the moral responsibility is not supposed to lie at the door of the late owners. When a kindly old missionary friend of ours drowned a superfluous litter of kittens his Japanese servant packed up her belongings and cleared out, refusing to stay one moment longer in the house of a person she regarded as an inhuman monster.

### 3. MEDICAL

It is very probable that in this plain description of the real Japan there are some things not at all in accordance with the usual notions about that country. At the same time, throughout this description there will be nothing but what comes within the ordinary observation and common experience of people living and working there. It will be well to recall our first point of view, that we are not dealing with a Western nation, but with Orientals still in a very unsettled state of transition.

In no sphere will bare facts seem harder to believe than in medical matters. Doctors, like lawyers, enjoy a favoured social position, and this, together with the profits offered, attracts many young men to the profession. It remains to be seen, however, what the academic qualifications are really worth under a system which is famous for faked exam results and the granting of diplomas as a matter of form. Quite recently a number of students at one well-known university were warned that their standard was too

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packages of dressings, and rusty instruments. If I had wanted treatment for any serious open wound, with risk of infection, I would rather have undertaken the overnight journey to the nearest foreign doctor, at Kobe or Karui-zawa. But the local man soon fixed up my damaged rib, it healed quickly, and my chief difficulty was to get him to present his bill. Treatment and three visits at his surgery cost only 3s. 9d.

In a Government hospital in one of the biggest cities we saw twenty patients, men, women, and children, in cots and on stretchers, crammed into one room for routine morning dressings, in an atmosphere of steam and mingled odours. And yet it was at that same hospital, on the recommendation of a Canadian friend, that I had a lot of dental work done by two of the local staff, whose results were remarkably neat and durable, quite in keeping with the excellent reputation of other Japanese dentists we have known.

Although both doctors and general public have so little affection for irksome fundamentals such as order and cleanliness, there is no lack of external display to make an impression of profound knowledge. The hypodermic syringe is a favourite implement; bandages are worn with an air of distinction; athletes daub their limbs with great patches of iodine, to demonstrate the scientific nature of their training. Patent medicines flourish even more than in other countries; chemists' windows exhibit the most complicated paraphernalia for the private treatment of complaints. In addition to national respiratory diseases, digestive troubles are also very prevalent, the inevitable result of meagre and monotonous diet, together with the custom of bolting large quantities of rice, the finer, polished variety being the acknowledged cause of frequent beriberi.

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For these common complaints people are for ever dosing themselves; anxious hypochondriacs are often seen swallowing pills and potions in public, or actually walking along with a clinical thermometer in the mouth. In spite of public apathy in matters of hygiene, people show a highly nervous alarm for their own personal health, or, rather, in case of sickness.

The most conspicuous prophylactic gadget is the funny little respiratory mask that so many people wear over mouth and nose, particularly in winter. It is made of thin black material, with an inner pad of gauze, and two elastic loops over the ears. In very cold weather it may be worn with a pair of dinky little ear-muffs of fur. These masks are carried with a becomingly scientific impressiveness, but they are a never-failing source of curiosity and merriment to ribald foreigners. In spite of diligent research, we never could get to know whether they are meant to keep the wearer's microbes in or other people's out. They are most common among the ultra-modern men in the big cities, but, like the intellectual-looking black-rimmed spectacles, they are not at all the fashion among women.

Even with the first-aid practice from my old ambulance days I had to be very cautious about offering help in case of a street accident or other emergency in Japan. To begin with, it would have been necessary to shove one's way through a crowd of people already in a heated discussion as to possible causes, probable particularities, and the hypothetical effects of the case on everything from the roadway to the national foreign policy. If anyone had so far forgotten his Oriental dignity as to offer assistance, it would be by hoisting the victim to his feet and further complicating any injury already received. And if a white

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man was so unwise as to step in—well, there would at once be a general verdict of assault or barratry, mayhem or attempted spying in a strategic zone. Among these mistrustful neurotics whatever a stranger does is bound to have the worst construction placed upon it. I once spent nine-tenths of my lunch hour plunging about in three feet of snow, lassoing a tree branch and in the end releasing a crow that had got caught in some twigs. At once it was stated authoritatively all round the district that the foreigner had been catching poor little birds for his supper.

One morning there was the most extraordinary ‘accident’ I ever had to deal with. I was working in my study when there was a strange *toot-tooting* from a train passing on a branch line not far from our ‘official residence.’ Children were often playing about there; I looked out of the window and through the trees, but could see nothing except the moving train, which passed along and disappeared as usual. Shortly afterwards a Japanese colleague arrived with some academic inquiry, and we had spent some minutes discussing that when my wife came in from the kitchen, with the grocery messenger’s news that a child had been run over on the railway. Wondering if anything remained to be done after so much time had elapsed, I hurried out through the plantation to the railway-track, looking round for the pieces.

It was a curious *tableau*. The train was standing some distance down the line. The usually deserted spot had suddenly become dotted with interested spectators, standing at a respectful distance of anything up to fifty yards, and all gazing leisurely at the centre of the charming but mystifying picture, the victim himself. A large-sized boy was sitting at the foot of the low embankment howling lustily, and

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holding his hands in a curiously rigid position in front of him. A rapid survey for fractures or hæmorrhage revealed no injury beyond a slight scalp wound. I picked him up and carried him back to the house, where my wife had hot water and dressings ready. The boy's clothes were soaking wet, and we started to remove them, to look more closely for any injury and to get him dry and warm.

Enter a couple of hefty workmen, carrying a pole on which was slung a rope net, the usual contrivance for carrying stones, earth, or other burdens. Ambulance service being a thing unknown, they proposed to carry the boy in this slung net to a doctor's hospital a mile or so away. Not knowing what rules and regulations might govern the case, we handed him over, and they carried him off, all wet and cold, still howling steadily, and holding his hands in their strange rigidity. Later on we heard the solution of the mystery. This twelve-year-old boy was a mental defective; he had been wandering on the railway-track, had got scared by the engine whistle, had run forward and accidentally done the best thing possible for himself—tripped and fallen sideways down the low banking, slightly scratching his head on the way, and finishing up on the edge of a muddy rice-field. Eventually his only trouble was bronchitis, due to being carried in his wet clothes so far to the doctor's. This time the foreigner's reputation got off more luckily; the papers had a glowing account of my having saved a baby's life.

Life for Westerners in Japan is admittedly difficult, especially so for womenfolk in up-country places, where their health is likely to suffer from a variety of causes, more particularly nervous complaints. We two must have been pretty hardened cases, but many of our acquaintances in



## *Behind the Smile in Real Japan*

similar surroundings were not so fortunate. Our neighbour Mrs Chivers had frequent fits of depression; even the charming and vivacious Mme Rueff became a victim of nerves, and was at one and the same time a profitable client for the doctor, the dentist, and the oculist, without receiving much benefit from any. In missionary circles Japan is not considered as having a really unhealthy climate. Statistics show, however, that the average stay of a missionary there is less than three years. This seemingly extraordinary fact is not so hard to understand, however, in the light of social conditions and contacts. It needs strong and steady nerves to live among these often hysterical islanders. It was a returned Japanese traveller who said that he liked living in Western countries, where "people are not a nuisance to each other."

In countries which are officially regarded as backward foreign missionaries do a great deal of social work, whether it is appreciated or not, in running hospitals, schools, and other institutions. In Japan, however, they are not allowed to have any important part in medical work or in education. A good example of what happens to Western medical practice among Orientals is to be found in the experience of one new mission hospital we know, in one of the biggest Japanese cities. The American doctor in charge had a hard task, not only in getting the place going, but also in superintending the putting up of further buildings by a local contractor who neither knew nor cared anything about such specialized construction. The doctor was called away for some time on important business elsewhere, and had to leave the place in the hands of native assistants, with an American matron, who had done her training at two of the finest hospitals in the United States, and who

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planned to keep up the standard even in the East. She had a long and uphill fight, with a nervous breakdown, as might be expected, but with eventual success. The apathetic and slipshod nurses she won over by endless patience, skill, and firmness; the 100 per cent. order and cleanliness were marvellous to see. The local inhabitants, for whose benefit the hospital had been opened, at first looked askance at so much washing and cleansing. They refused to bring their sick relatives where the rest of the family was not allowed to camp out in the same room. For a year or two the wards remained almost empty, until people became more convinced, through the good report of patients who had received careful and skilful treatment there.

The few foreign doctors practising privately in the bigger cities are a boon to the white residents. It is not surprising that many of these medical practitioners are Scotsmen. One of these effected a cure which must surely be a record for speed and thoroughness. We spent one Christmas with some English friends in the southern island of Kyushu. As one result of the super-hospitality I had an attack of hiccup, which resisted all remedies and after several days threatened to become painfully chronic. The crossing of the Inland Sea on the way back again was stormy, and threatened seasickness dislodged the hiccup, but to make sure of it I called on Dr MacPherson in Kobe. Within two minutes he had greeted me warmly with the compliments of the season, given me a prescription, charged me half a guinea, and sent me on my way with best wishes for the New Year. I had the prescription made up, but apparently the quick visit had already cured me, and I was never troubled with hiccup again.

## *Behind the Smile in Real Japan*

Every foreigner in Japan knows the Grand Old Man, Dr Gordon MacNeil—even if the name, like others in this narrative, is not quite the original. A good deal of history has happened since he first went out there, about half a century ago. Like so many young doctors, he did a trip as a ship's surgeon, but instead of coming home again to settle down he stayed in Yokohama, where he established a practice which could easily have made him a fortune, but never did. Dr MacNeil has always been the most amazing contradiction of the traditional Scot. Innumerable stories are told of his disregard for his own welfare, of his generosity—especially towards his poorer Japanese patients, who were never slow to take advantage of it, nor were they by any means alone in doing so.

Misfortunes of many kinds have haunted him, especially in the research work in which he is so interested. Many years ago he began to study the Ainu, those strange aboriginal inhabitants now to be found mostly in Hokkaido, the northern island. Probably no one in the world has gathered anything like so much scientific knowledge about the Ainu, or has had such difficulty in handing on information concerning this disappearing race. It is true that some Japanese savants declared themselves interested in the work of this foreign scientist, and politely requested the loan of his documents, which were just as politely retained in their possession. Dr MacNeil was once offered an important academical post back home in Great Britain, but by a curious delay in the Japanese post-office the letter did not reach him till too late.

In the earthquake of 1923 his house in Yokohama was burned to the ground, and with it went all his further records of investigations, his photographs, anthropometric

## *Health*

figures, and other data about the Ainu. Already an old man, he made a fresh start, taking on a nursing-home up among the central mountains at Karuizawa, the health resort so well known to foreign residents. During the summer months, when the resort was full, and many foreigners were accustomed to go into the nursing-home to get rid of illnesses contracted at their various places of work down on the plains during the rest of the year, this very useful institution could pay its way, and was run by a joint committee of Japanese and foreigners. For the rest of the year it was handed over to Dr MacNeil, who accommodated any guests wishing to use it as a rest-home, kept instruments, apparatus, and everything else in good order, and incidentally incurred a financial loss for himself.

A scientific association in England sent out fresh funds and equipment for the resumption of anthropological study among the Ainu. With the joyful keenness of the youngster the doctor handed over the nursing-home to the committee, and set off north again to get on with his cherished work. But he reckoned without his hosts. On his arrival in Hokkaido he had to wait for the completion of the promised fire-proof building for documents, instruments, and other equipment. Moreover, the police were particularly insistent about inspecting a revolver that was supposed to be in his possession. (They always are officially fastidious about any foreigner who keeps a handy pistol for the reception of the cheeky knife-carrying burglars. The official view is that foreigners in possession of firearms constitute a menace to national security. And so these officious officials just hate to be reminded of the five Japanese public men who were assassinated within a short period by native fanatics.)

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Curiously enough, Dr MacNeil's little pistol could not be found. It was supposed to be in a handbag which, curiously again, had gone astray during the journey north. Anyhow, the police spread his other baggage about in the house he was occupying, and said they would return to continue the search in the morning. That house went up in flames during the night, and the doctor barely escaped with his life.

The association in England once again sent out the necessary means for the resumption of scientific research among the Ainu, and at the age of seventy odd this stout-hearted old fellow started again.

## CHAPTER IV

### *In Town*

#### I. STREETS

URBAN landscapes in most countries are repulsive spectacles, a cynical comment on what the world might be if it were not for the people in it. Earth hath not anything to show more ugly than a Western industrial town. So, with that enchantment which distance lends the view, we imagine Oriental cities to be everything that ours are not. From the golden temples and pagodas deep-toned bells waft sweet music o'er the scented air. Cherry-blossoms mingle their fragrance and delicate tints with those of chrysanthemums at any old time of the year. Gaily painted rickshas, or maybe kickshaws, glide smoothly by. Quaintly pig-tailed dandies and tiny-footed damsels saunter along in silken *kimono*, no matter whether we happen to be thinking of China or Japan, of this century or last. Everywhere resound the silvery voices of happy children, and over all beams the just comfortably warm sun from a perpetually cloudless sky.

Alas! the shattering disillusion of things as they are on the spot. The predominating hue of a Japanese town, whether industrial or not, is grey: grey dust or mud in the roadways, faded grey of unpainted, weathered wooden buildings, heavy grey tiled roofs. It is only in contrast with the general drabness that any high spots of colour stand out, and then chiefly because they are so steadily boosted to the world by national publicists and romantically inclined



HANDCARTS



A HAWKEE

## *In Town*

systematic lines or plan, but are just a haphazard succession of buildings jutting out for various distances and at different angles. There are no pavements, except, as we have seen, in the main streets of the bigger cities, and the concrete patches in front of shops are cluttered with empty boxes and baskets, handcarts, bales of straw, and odd merchandise. The jumbled effect is increased by numbers of posts and poles, supporting the overhead tangle of wires and cables, which are never put underground, even in places which are hundreds of miles away from the risk of earthquake. In the roadway itself there is a medley of pedestrians and vehicles threading in and out.

Streets and roads in Japan have been described as a series of holes strung on ruts. They are usually nothing more than narrow winding tracks, made by the throwing down of pebbles, large or small, still round and rolling as when they were taken from the nearest river-bed. They are not even knapped to fit more readily together, and they are never crushed in by any official roller. This process is left to the crunching wheels of passing carts, aided to some extent by people who happen to be wearing shoes. The shuffling wooden *geta* do not contribute to the civic duty of smoothing the roads; they scatter loose pebbles in all directions, and dislodge those that are becoming embedded in the ground.

Tourists in the show-places of Tokyo will see comparatively smooth and wide boulevards. In other districts attempts have also been made at constructing more ambitious highways which often need patching or more serious treatment within a few weeks of their official opening. At the opening ceremony of a new public building I once got a snap of the town mayor's car with ~~one~~ wheel sunk



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to the axle in a freshly laid road. Important highways are sometimes started with concrete construction and continued as pebble tracks or left to fizzle out altogether when funds have been diverted to other and less public purposes. Surveyors and committees can be seen month after month solemnly drawing up plans and gravely discussing them; roads always seem to be under construction, but there never are any.

The usual track serving as street or road has no foundation. The cross-section exposed by any excavation shows an inch or two of pebbles, embedded in the ground during years or generations. Especially where heavier motor vehicles are running all day long, such a thin covering soon becomes worn, or completely broken through to the soft soil beneath. Repair is of the simplest; the roadway is strewn with more pebbles, over which people shuffle and slither for weeks and months, until the little round stones have sunk into the ground. Whenever we returned to Western surroundings we had to get used to seeing repairs being done to roadways wherever necessary. We revelled in being able to walk on a smooth surface, and without the necessity for keeping a constant look-out in all directions, as one has to do in a Japanese street when sharing the roadway with all sorts of vehicles.

Even though the general effect of buildings and thoroughfare is not harmonious, individual details of the kaleidoscopic scene offer an infinite variety of interest, no matter how long one may live in these surroundings. Passers-by wear the costumes already described, the women in the old-fashioned *kimono* and *obi*, the men also in the flapping skirts of the masculine form of *kimono*, or displaying their own particular interpretations of foreign suits. In the

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open space before a Buddhist temple, copied from China ages ago, some schoolboys in their military uniform are playing American baseball. The radio from every other shop doorway pours out the Oriental music of a song four hundred years old, then changes to the next item, the shrill nasal droning of a speaker for an Osaka newspaper's latest health campaign, while just below, a number of children, with the usual skin affections and running noses, are grubbing contentedly in the slime of an open drain.

A Chevrolet motor-truck, loaded with bales of cotton for a new local factory, goes rumbling past a couple of straining coolies harnessed to a rough wooden handcart piled high with straw bales of rice. An old peasant woman with a heavy load of firewood on her back goes shuffling along, reminding us of the written word for 'woman' in both Chinese and Japanese—based on the picture of a female figure stooping beneath a weighty burden. Some more countrywomen go by, with shoulders bent forward and arms swinging before them, as they pull at the traces of another wooden handcart.

There is the screech of a horn as a smart-looking motor-car goes quickly past, containing a couple of men in ceremonial *kimono*, evidently on some serious business. There are very few privately owned cars, the custom being to hire one when needed, from a garage or parking-place, usually near a station. To enjoy the full savour of this luxury a Japanese citizen insists on choosing a car that looks new and shining. Any vehicle that is slightly old or shabby he will pass over in disdain, and look down the row till he sees one to his taste.

We see very few rickshas about now; that one that has just passed we recognize as a doctor's, by the nickel-plated

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fittings and the uniform of the man in the shafts, not to mention the self-conscious dignity of the medical gentleman who sits so erect in this high, narrow little carriage. Rickshas are said to have been invented by a European who lived many years ago somewhere on the southern shores of Asia, and who needed something to help him in bearing the white man's burden, while being transported from place to place by his darker-skinned fellow-men. In the olden days the rickshas must have been uncomfortable vehicles, as they had wooden wheels and iron tyres. Nowadays the wheels are like those of a bicycle, with wire spokes and metal rims, on which are fitted pneumatic tyres, specially made to a diameter of three feet or more. These handy little carriages are found in many parts of Southern and Eastern Asia. When one has overcome one's European antipathy to being hauled about by one's fellow-men they form a very pleasant means of locomotion. Most of them are slung low on the axle between the wheels; they are just roomy enough without being cumbersome, so that riding in them is like sitting down in a comfortable chair and gliding away. In Japan, not unnaturally, the ricksha has evolved in a peculiar form. Possibly owing to the Japanese desire for a sense of superiority, the body of the ricksha is mounted very high between the wheels. One result is that when at rest, with the shaft-tips on the ground, the ricksha slopes forward at a steep angle, making it more difficult to get in or out. When the vehicle is in motion, too, the added height and exceptional narrowness of the seat give the rider the appearance of being perched aloft, swaying and jolting on the springs with every movement over the bumpy roads. In China the ricksha-men move along at a good pace, but in Japan they proceed in a

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leisurely fashion, as if to preserve the national dignity. In Korea and Manchuria one might think that the dominating Japanese would decline the occupation of draught animals. In the big cities such as Seoul and Dairen, at any rate, Japanese ricksha-men maintain a monopoly, and keep up the national fondness for uniforms.

A short while ago we heard of Japanese bicycles that were being exported at a price of ten shillings each, and after due reflection we should say that they would probably be worth it. In Japan itself they are at the same time the commonest means of street locomotion and a pest to the inhabitants themselves. Legislation has been brought in to control the hordes of shop messengers on bicycles, in places like Tokyo and Osaka, but they still remain. Once again both machines and method of riding are peculiar to the country. Bars, forks, and other parts are heavily built, and duplicated, to stand the shocks of the terrible roads. When mounting, the rider never swings his leg over the back of the machine, but flicks it over the crossbar, with a quick doubling movement of the knee which is possible only to these people of peculiar joints. Moreover, it is quite likely that the stout back carrier, like the front one, is piled high and heavily with goods. This cheap sort of man-power is still further utilized by the addition of a trailer fastened behind the shop messenger's bicycle. This supplementary vehicle is made with a framework of metal tubing, running on pneumatic-tyred wheels, one at each side. The load thus dragged amounts to a goodly fraction of a ton, the rider pushing slowly and heavily on his pedals, or having to get off and shove along the machine with trailer attached. Every bicycle is fitted with a stand for the back wheel, like a motor-cycle. When the rider dismounts he

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kicks this stand into position, and leaves the bicycle, with or without trailer, in the middle of the roadway, across a narrow passage, or anywhere else that suits his own convenience. Obstructions of all kinds are taken for granted in this land of excessive politeness and scant courtesy.

The clumsy old wooden handcarts are now often seen with a pair of pneumatic-tyred wheels, presumably for ease of traction. As these wheels have the proportions of those on a full-sized motor-car, however, they give the little handcarts an even more ponderous appearance than did the wooden, iron-tyred wheels of old. In some cases the wooden handcarts are superseded by a contraption similar to the cycle trailers, a metal-tube framework slung low on a pair of pneumatic-tyred wheels. It is another queer mixture of old and new; these more or less modernized vehicles are dragged along by man- or woman-power, and they play their part in the old-fashioned transport of night-soil tubs throughout the day.

They are now also the means of conveyance favoured by another familiar figure in street life, the *tofu*-man. Every day towards noon, and again about four o'clock, we hear the tooting of a little brass horn, blown by the men who are bringing round the *tofu*, a bean-paste forming an important item in Japanese meals. There is just enough difference in the sound of the various dealers' horns for the households to distinguish them. Womenfolk bring out their little basins or dishes, or, in the case of regular customers, the *tofu*-man lifts the slabs of bean-paste from his big box by means of a wooden scoop, and delivers it at the kitchen door. To mere foreign eyes this paste looks like nothing so much as an anæmic caramel custard which has not yet decided what to make of itself. To foreign palates it is

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almost tasteless, though it is much favoured by the Japanese. It is made from soya-beans, a staple product of Manchuria, and is therefore one cause of the deep interest taken by Japan in that mainland territory.

To a visitor's eye a Japanese street seems to be perpetually decorated by the banner-like vertical posters and other announcements, inscribed on long hanging strips of thin material waving and flapping in the breeze. They are done mostly in the national colours, red and white, though others are freely used. Without these spots and splashes of colour the street scene would be drab indeed, with its greyish wooden buildings in jagged lines and the tangle of wires overhead. Some streets have no advertising banners or jutting shop-fronts, for they are the residential quarters, and the street-sides are made up of wooden-board fences, so high that very little can be seen of the low-built house within, with its overhanging roof, surrounding paper screens, and miniature garden. Houses and shops are not numbered along the street, but according to a system of *cho*, which are blocks or sections of the town. When looking for any particular address the stranger may trace the numbers along a street as far as, say, 119, but then find that the No. 120 that he wants is round the back of the block, or tucked away in a side passage, or even in another main street altogether.

### 2. SHOPPING

In many places most of the streets seem full of shops, and mere dwelling-houses appear to be in a minority. Statisticians have estimated that even in Tokyo one address in every four is a place of business of one sort or another.

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than what he expects to pay; and so the bargaining goes on, with many diversions and devious returns to the business in hand, till at last the inevitable compromise is reached. Quantities and measurements are also a law unto themselves. Things go in fives and tens, not dozens. The metric system is sometimes used, but there are older measures, which vary according to circumstances. The carpenter's foot length is the same as the English, but it is less than the draper's, and in either case the foot is divided into ten *sun*, not twelve inches. Once when my wife was buying an odd length of cloth she approximated the yards by holding one end to her face and measuring off with outstretched arm, in the way familiar to shopping housewives at home. That was a new one to the Japanese assistant, however, so she applied the material to her nose to find out what the foreign lady was smelling at. Followed explanations, interested surprise, and laughter all round.

If you were to buy two small plates at twenty-five *sen* each, or ten packets of toothpicks at five *sen* a packet, you would know off-hand that that makes fifty *sen*. But a Japanese, from a banker down to a retail shopkeeper, would not dream of making the slightest calculation without reaching out for his *soroban*, a quaint little gadget in which we recognize a variation of the abacus from kindergarten days. It is also met with in China and Russia, though the Japanese type is rather neater than the others. In an oblong frame, anything from a few inches to a couple of feet in length, there are rows and rows of large wooden beads, with their circumference bevelled off for convenience in fingering, sliding freely up and down on slender cross-bars, each of which has a row of five beads, with an extra one all by itself in a little gallery just above.

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Grasping the instrument firmly but gracefully in the left hand, you use the index finger of the right hand to fiddle about among the beads. You slide along the gallery, pushing up all the extra beads into a straight row; then you disarrange this row, and with another sweeping slide you push down all the gallery beads into their original positions. Starting with the column of beads under the *yen* sign, you push up three of them to register that number of *yen*. To add *yen* 2.57 and 1.44 you push up the requisite number of beads in the *sen* column, then the *yen* column, being careful to adjust at every step for fives and tens, carrying over to the next column, and so on and so forth.

It all sounds delightfully simple, but it is really even simpler than that, for it does not matter what result is obtained. I once upon a time thought that the *soroban* was a foolproof calculator which always gave the right answer. Our twenty-year-old business students had lectures and technical practice in the subject. The professor of finance would read out rows and lists of numbers, amounts of money, and what not, and the room resounded to the *clickety-click* of a hundred odd *soroban*. The results, even in a term exam, revealed an amazing variety.

In a shop you must not be surprised if the proprietor or his assistant, after due use of the *soroban*, tells you that your two plates at twenty-five *sen* cost fifty-three *sen*, or maybe forty-eight; the variation is just as likely to be one side as the other. There is a charming lilt about the business of counting, though even this might get monotonous after several hours or days of checking accounts for the yearly balance. One clerk sings out the numbers from the book or paper, intoning in a fashion just a bit like a Gregorian chant: *San-yen-go-jissen-nari! Roku-yen-nana-jissen-*



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look out on all the world around him without the risk of getting mixed up in it. There are rakes of bamboo, scoops, spades, boards, mats, string, rope, and paper. The whole collection is a most striking example of ingenuity in making implements from the simplest of materials at hand.

On the other hand, there are many shops showing an increasingly wide range of factory-made articles. Imitations of Western ideas are often most pathetic in their crudity, but more and more articles are being turned out for home use, well suited and of good quality. Ironmongery, for example, shows a useful lot of household utensils in enamel, white metal, and other materials.

### 3. CRAFTSMEN

The more we become acquainted with Japanese town life, the more we shall realize the extent to which manual work still prevails. In many cases articles are not only sold in the shop, but made on the premises. We see workmen making and mending the wooden *geta*, the large umbrellas of bamboo and oiled paper, lanterns of the same materials, the straw floor *tatami*, and the wood and paper screens which slide round the rooms. Obliging artisans or proprietors will let us watch the intricate processes of making porcelain, lacquer ware, or other ornamental products for which they are justly famous. The more we see of Japanese craftsmen at work, the more we shall marvel at their artistic skill and endless patience, hardly to be equalled anywhere else in the world. Many of the arts they practise have been introduced from China and other countries a long time ago, but it seems that the Japanese

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have improved upon some of them, and attained an even higher standard of workmanship.

At first it may be hard to reconcile this wonderful craftsmanship with the very doubtful reputation of the Japanese in modern manufactures. It is strange to find such a herd-folk carrying on traditions of individual handicraft, but not taking at all kindly to the mass-labour and production of mechanized industries. This paradox, however, is not so difficult to explain. To begin with, the handicrafts are not so individual as they appear to be. The artisans, skilled and patient though they are, do little more than reproduce large numbers of copies of models and designs whose perfection has been attained through generations of practice. Their work might well be called mass-production by hand instead of by machine. There is, in addition, a strong leaning towards the ornamental rather than the practical. Three centuries ago, for instance, a famous European mariner remarked that, while the Japanese were expert in copying the Chinese art of making kites which could be controlled by a turn of the finger, their own ships were hopelessly cumbersome.

As far as modern machines and contrivances are concerned, the Japanese have never really welcomed them—for several reasons. Serious young men will tell you quite readily that “Mechanization is the symbol of Western materialism, and antagonistic to our national spirituality.”

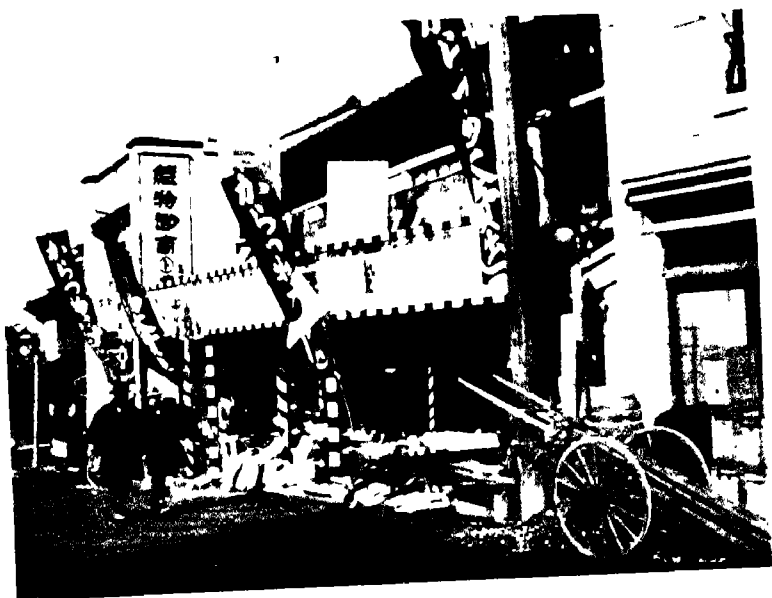
There is without doubt a strong fear of the troubles which might be caused by the extensive use of machines among this teeming population, which can exist only so long as laborious methods make enough jobs to go round. This attitude may seem a contrast to the official policy in that other more or less Oriental country, the Soviet Union,

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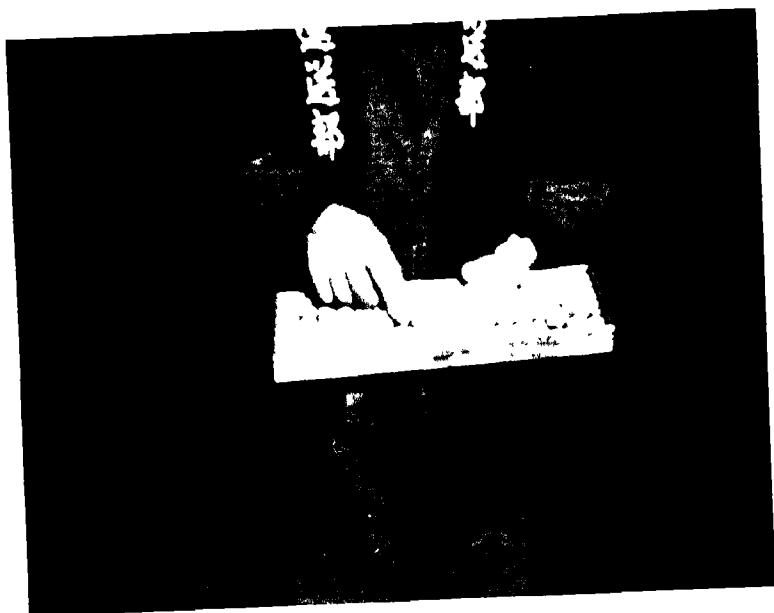
which has committed itself to Western competition, and where the idolization of the machines is itself a contrast to their unskilful handling by unaccustomed workers recruited largely from a peasant population. However opposite the attitude may be, the result is similar in both countries—a good deal of waste and inefficiency. The nature of their future progress will form one of the most interesting studies in the world.

People at home may not quite realize the very special relationship which exists between men and machines in our own country—in spite of economic problems arising from our mechanized industry. It is a fact that in no other land is there such a fondness, among boys and old boys, for ‘seeing how it works.’ Americans may be better off in the number of mechanical playthings made for them, but even they are not so keen as English youngsters on actually making things for themselves. I remember visiting a New York exhibition that was supposed to be something extra special in the way of model ‘planes, boats, and other miniatures, but the whole collection could have been lost in an odd corner of the routine shows of the same kind in England. The old joke about the father and uncles who monopolize the boys’ Meccano sets and toy railways on Christmas afternoon has its foundation in fact. We see professional engine-drivers spending their spare time at model engineering exhibitions, running miniature locomotives. Those exhibitions are sights that you could not see anywhere else in the world. Boys from seven to seventy-seven bury their noses most earnestly in machinery and concurrent problems, and the fever seems to be spreading to Mother and the girls as well.

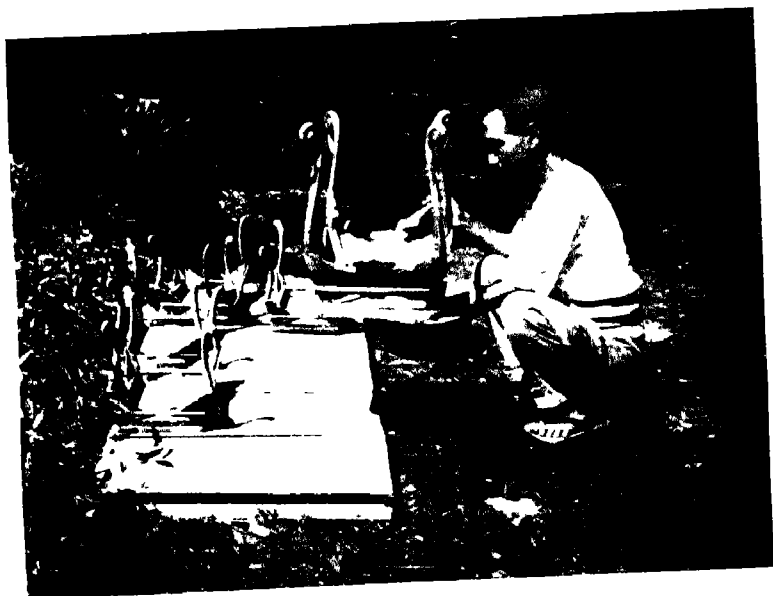
Mechanical sense and traditions are, of course, also



SHOP-FRONTS



USING A SOROBAN



PLAYING

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strong in other Western countries, where machines and men have, as it were, developed together through several generations. In the East, however, the situation is entirely different. Even in Japan there is no such background of long experience and mechanical training. Technical studies are on the official programme of education, it is true, but they are largely theoretical; like the industrial undertakings, they suffer from haste and superficiality, and they are still regarded with antipathy, as something not quite in keeping with the national dignity.

Japanese schoolboys have great difficulty in understanding the real meaning of the English word 'hobby.' For them spare time is pleasantly whiled away in reading books and magazines, talking, playing the heroic stories from national history, and in other traditional ways. It took a 'victorious war' in Manchuria to get young Japan interested in machines of any kind, and then only because they were of a kind which also appealed to the innate warrior spirit. Shops in which there had never been any demand for 'boyish' toys were then suddenly filled with displays of model guns, tanks, and other miniature copies of the military weapons which Japan was buying in such huge quantities from Western countries, for use on the despised and backward Chinese. Not only small boys but grown men could be seen launching model aeroplanes in open spaces—a remarkable phenomenon, in view of their usual contempt for such handiwork.

A certain delicacy of workmanship in the wood and fabric of these model 'planes could be traced to the kite-flying of old, but the relative crudity of the motor and other working parts was characteristic of the makers' limited acquaintance with machinery of any kind. Any

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pride we felt in this one sign of awakening interest among budding amateur mechanics in Nippon was rudely and hopelessly swamped as soon as we saw youngsters' hobbies back in England, or looked at any toyshop window.

It would often seem that Japanese artisans actually concerned with machinery get a certain youthful thrill out of their occupation. Engineers on board ship gravely discuss some process or problem, and illustrate it with diagrams in chalk, especially if some one happens to be watching them. In the open space before a garage at the side of a street or road in Japan one often sees a mechanic seated on the ground with the parts of a motor spread around him, like a small boy with a Meccano set, and as seriously engrossed. He is not occupied with actual repair so much as finding out where all those pieces come from, and no doubt hoping that he can get them all back again.

### 4. AT THE CINEMA

A picture theatre, like many other buildings in town, is mostly constructed of wooden boarding, perhaps with a roof of corrugated iron. The front is made up of laths daubed over with plaster to represent concrete. The names of pictures and famous actors are inscribed on the cotton banners which flap to and fro in the wind, or on vertical posters of tin or paper fastened on to wooden frames. Scenes from current films are realistically hand-painted on the space above the entrance. Patrons wishing to sit in the balcony must leave their footwear with a caretaker just inside the doorway, receiving a numbered wooden tally in exchange.

Our first impression inside is of a bare shack, with seats

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of a sort filling the floor downstairs, and a balcony running round three sides of the walls. The screen at the far end is covered with a faded curtain, and below it music is being perpetrated by a violin, a flute, and a long-suffering piano, or else by a radio-gramophone which is playing about fifteen times too loud—enough to drown even a Chinese theatre orchestra, and that is indeed saying something.

Gingerly we take a perch on one of the long wooden benches, which are about a foot high and rather less than that wide, with a single back rail that catches us painfully in the vertebræ. Among these floor-squatting people a seat of any kind is a modern luxury, unappreciated by ordinary-sized Europeans. So we must sit huddled up in this cramped space, with our knees jammed against the next bench close in front. In order to enable people to see at all over the heads of those in front the floor is made with a gentle slope downward towards the screen, but the benches are not fixed, and the resulting forward tilt makes one's perch still more precarious.

Those who have left their footgear at the door go up to the balcony, where an extra charge is made. Here there are no seats; people just squat on the boards covered with thin matting. Floor cushions can be hired, as well as a little *hibachi* to warm one's fingers—at least, until the charcoal smoulders away. Whether upstairs or down, people clatter and shuffle in and out, past you, round you, over you. The balcony is the recognized playground for small children, who ought to have been in bed long ago, in any case. Boys and girls of school age are not supposed to go to the pictures, as their youthful minds might become contaminated by foreign films, which are highly popular for all that. One wonders what sort of idea Japanese people get of life in



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America as interpreted by Hollywood. Films from abroad are rather gleefully accepted as conclusive evidence of the depravity and inferiority of all foreign nations, whose customs and conventions do not conform to those of Japan, and are therefore obviously and irrefutably wrong.

In spite of the total absence of what might be called comfort in the accommodation of a Japanese cinema, prices of admission are about the same as in other countries. No regulations are observed as to crowding or emergencies. People can tuck themselves away in a minimum of space; even in the big city cinemas it is common to see all passages full of people standing, to increase the box-office takings. It will not be surprising if one of these days there are big headlines about a frightful disaster at a picture theatre in Japan—and the authorities there will tell the usual story of *Shikata ga nai!* and of the exceptional tribulations which their poor country is called upon to bear.

However precautions against fire may be lacking, there is always an important-looking policeman on duty, to keep an eye on public morals, dangerous thoughts, and other matters of official importance. He sits aloft at the screen end of the balcony, getting a hopelessly distorted view of the pictures, but a good general view of the people below. As in any other place of assembly, the sexes are strictly separated, women on the left, men on the right.

Cinema pictures are regarded merely as illustrations incidental to story-telling, a long-established and still popular pastime all over the East. In a Japanese cinema the showing of the film is the accompaniment for the narration of the whole tale by that very important person the *katsuben*, the interpreter, or interrupter, as he is called by facetious foreigners, for even while a talkie is going on

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the *katsuben* keeps on at full blast, and the screen sounds are often damped down to let the story-teller's raucous voice be heard to better advantage. He sits at one side of the platform below the screen, keeping one eye on the picture while he recounts the narrative from the official book of words, or from his own vivid imagination. He imitates all the voices of the different characters, as well as other sounds, and altogether he is a very versatile and entertaining character himself. His efforts are hardly appreciated when foreigners are trying to listen to a talkie in their own language, but at least he is sometimes left helpless and speechless in the face of American humour or music. And if any foreign spectators present happen to be enjoying one of their own country's films the native members of the audience, furious at the idea that some one else should understand something that they cannot, may yell at them to shut up.

Film themes are drawn largely from stories of the old feudal age, whose atmosphere and local colour do not seem so very distant even nowadays. Film producers have no difficulty in finding many spots where the surroundings are just the same as in the old days. It has been known for a telegraph post or a distant motor-car to creep in on the outskirts of a picture illustrating olden times, but such anachronisms are rare. In many a quarter of a Japanese town, and still more in the country, one can look round at a scene which is pretty much as it was in days of yore. Perhaps the most striking difference noticeable in the films themselves is that the men wear distinctive styles of hair-dressing, as they did in those feudal days. Details of dress, however, and house interiors are often very much as we see them now.

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around, and pulls the most terrible faces at all points of the compass.

Talkies, like telephones, radio, and gramophone records, are a deafening hoot. The use of any acoustic instrument seems to necessitate a bellowing, as if to let the whole world hear at once. Japan is the country where people are most fond of hearing their own voices, shrill and nasal though they are to an outsider's ear.

Some modern films are turned out for the younger generation, with stories of youthful aspirations set against elderly tyranny, and with a tearful morbidity well in keeping with the racial tendency to melancholia. Love-making and kisses must not be shown. These salutations of affection are not considered fitting to national morals, and they are censored out of foreign films. Now and then the American managers of cinema agencies give their friends a thrilling private view of films made up from the snippets which have failed to please the Nipponese guardians of public rectitude.

During the Olympic Games, the periodical wars against China, and similar occasions of patriotic fervour the cinema is made to do its full share in telling the nation all about its superiority over its rivals.

We are often told that, in point of the actual number of films turned out per annum, production is greater in Japan than in any other country. As these films are nearly all concerned with the old long-drawn-out stories, or equally lengthy themes from modern life, intelligible only to native patrons, and as all the titling and sound-work, if any, is in Japanese, it is easy to see why this enormous output does not get beyond the boundaries of the country. There is official encouragement for the export of films of a certain

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type, extolling the more beautiful features of Nippon, with copious cherry-blossoms, flowery *kimono*, scenic spots and other picturesque views, in a determined effort to spread a good impression as a possible antidote to the other kind of impression caused by Japan's activities in other directions. It is often noticeable that even in these well-meaning efforts the national publicists cannot rest satisfied with letting the pictures tell their own story, romanticized though it be. They seem unable to resist the temptation to insert bits of obvious and superfluous propaganda, like a political speaker or an American advertiser on the wireless. However much one may prefer the peculiarities of one's own country, it is not necessary or customary to keep on telling the world about them. Producers of such films for use abroad are constantly pointing out how much better things are done in Japan than anywhere else. They indicate, for example, that chopsticks used right through a meal are much more civilized than knives and forks, that wooden *geta* are much nicer than leather shoes. One feels that they are seeking to console themselves for their own difficulties and shortcomings in their frantic imitation of the West, by leaving the impression that they regard the whole outside world as crudely barbarian. At the same time, the general run of films so popular in Japan itself would be incomprehensible, almost incredible, to people anywhere else. Like many of the nation's products, they are of a very peculiar type, more suited to home consumption.

## CHAPTER V

### *Public Services*

#### I. FIREMEN AND POLICE

THERE are several familiar words of dreadful import which strike terror into the oft-harassed dwellers in a Japanese town or village. One of these is "*Jishin!*"<sup>1</sup> —jerked out as the occupants of a house make a hurried dive for safety outside, in order not to be caught under splintering timbers and crushing tile roof. Another is "*Dorobo!*"<sup>2</sup>—but this is not so often heard, as it proves singularly ineffective. If anyone did raise the cry, expecting aid against unwelcome marauders, the neighbours would just cower more closely into their sleeping quilts, hoping that the threatening visitor might not come their way. In case of such an intrusion by night it is far better to raise the cry of "*Kaji!*"<sup>3</sup> —which will rouse neighbours much more effectively, and may even bring some of them out of doors, to see how nearly their own house is threatened.

It may be imagined that among these houses, with so much wood, paper, and other inflammable material in their construction, not to mention the narrow, winding streets which they form, outbreaks of fire are frequent in occurrence and devastating in effect. One never hears that a certain house has been burned down; it is always half a dozen, fifty odd, several hundred houses. In many cases a spark or an ember from the charcoal in a *hibachi* has come into contact with a paper screen or straw mat. The blaze

<sup>1</sup> "Earthquake!"

<sup>2</sup> "Burglars!"

<sup>3</sup> "Fire!"

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spreads rapidly; the panic-stricken occupants dash outside, snatching up anything they can carry. Presently the fire-brigade's siren is heard howling mournfully through the streets. The dismal beating of a gong on a signal tower warns people in the neighbourhood to stand by, in anxious readiness to carry off their portable possessions if the fire should come their way.

An ancient custom requires that the firemen shall be liberally supplied with rice-wine before and during any operations. It has often been known for them to refuse to start if this refreshing supply is not forthcoming. Meanwhile the police come along to ascertain in which house the fire began, and the unlucky householder is hauled away to their office for investigation. The firemen use long hooked poles to demolish whole houses, in an attempt to create a gap round the blazing centre. As there are so few high buildings there are no fire-escapes, beyond a few bamboo ladders carried by hand. Not so long ago a fire broke out in a big department store in Tokyo, and it was discovered that the city's fire-fighting apparatus was a long way behind the advance made in size by such metropolitan buildings. There being no regulations as to permanent fireproof escapes to be fixed on the outside walls, the wooden ladders brought along were the only possible means of escape, but these were far too short to enable the firemen to rescue people from upper windows, or to attack the flames from above. With the extraordinary luck which so often accompanies such lack of preparation, however, the fire had very kindly broken out early in the forenoon, when there were very few people besides the employees in the building, and these managed to escape somehow.

In this land of copious rainfall, running ditches, and

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open drains, shortage of water is often given as the official reason for failure in coping with an outbreak. We have known this happen within a short distance of a castle moat, when a motor fire-engine was on the spot. In any town of size there may be one or two such engines of the Merryweather type, but often they are kept in a condition which would give the makers insomnia if they could only see these neglected machines. It is usual for these bigger and more modern motors to be rushed out to any fire which threatens to spread in a neighbouring locality. We got quite used to hearing the fire-siren howling as the motor rumbled out to some country village at any hour of the day or night. We could watch the usual glow in the sky, sometimes the smoke and flames themselves, till they died down again, and the fire-gongs on the look-out towers sounded "All clear!"

Branch stations are dotted about in towns and villages, but the fire-engines at these places are of an unbelievably ancient type, with manual pumps, or tiny, shabby-looking steam-pumps, with an extra length of tin piping let into the top of the brass chimney. Fire practice is sometimes pathetically reminiscent of Mr Fred Karno at his best. The fattest fireman stopping up the biggest leak in the hosepipe is a sight we have actually seen.

Early in January each year there is a parade of firemen in every town. This is an old feudal custom, dating from the times when watchmen and all other guardians of peace and safety were drawn from the retainers of the local overlord, or *daimyo*. To this day such parades retain much of their medieval character. From all parts of the town and its environs the brigades assemble, dragging their funny little toy fire-engines at the end of long ropes. Horses are

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never used for this purpose; somehow one simply cannot imagine the sorry native nags attaining the speed and skill of the splendid fire-brigade animals formerly used in Western countries. Nor do firemen wear helmets; their uniform dates from those feudal retainers of old, and they carry banners and emblems, as did their predecessors so long ago.

At the opening of the festival individual firemen from different stations give an acrobatic display on bamboo ladders, which are held vertically by their comrades below. Speech-making is an essential item on this as on all other occasions. The assembled brigades are harangued by the chiefs and other dignitaries, whose stirring remarks may range from the lofty theme of Nippon's destiny on the high seas to the sacred duty of combating the ruddy flame of radicalism, internationalism, or any other 'ism,' when and wherever found. To a mere foreigner, however, the question invariably and irresistibly occurs: What happens if a fire breaks out somewhere while every man and engine in the district is on this solemn parade? Things like this do sometimes occur. We attended one such ceremony, in a town of a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, where a large section of the whole place, and half the next town too, had been burned down in two extensive outbreaks, but this recent calamity did not in the least detract from the dignity of the assembled officials, nor did the coincidence strike the ordinary public as being at all strange.

It is quite common for sections of a town, or whole villages, to be wiped out again and again by fire. They are just rebuilt of the same inflammable materials, houses and shops being packed together along the same narrow winding streets as before. "*Shikata ga nai!*" This fatalistic acquiescence combines with a long inheritance of fires,



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floods, earthquakes, and other disasters in giving a general atmosphere of uncertainty and impermanence.

Public service of any kind is a notion but poorly understood by Orientals. Conscientious electors in England, jealously watchful of every item in expenditure by city or State, would be horrified at the way public funds are disposed of in this Eastern country. On the other hand, native inhabitants would be amazed at the idea that an account should be demanded or rendered as to the disposal of money raised by taxation. The feudal spirit still requires that the good citizen shall pay up and ask no questions.

Government remains in the hands of certain powerful groups, the rivalry among the various clans being carried on under the guise of party politics, in imitation of the West. There is little if any difference between the two most powerful parties, the *Seiyukai* and the *Minseito*, who in turn enjoy or covet the spoils of office. The disorderly scenes so common in what is called the House of Representatives, as well as the wholesale bribery and graft going on behind the scenes, are amazing even in this modern world. At intervals one side or the other brings about an exposure of its rivals' clandestine plots and corruption, incidentally revealing a state of affairs which is the despair of those thoughtful Japanese who are wishing and working to see their nation truly great.

The maintenance of control at any cost is the chief concern of any Government in power, and it is to the interest not only of Ministers and members themselves, but also of their satellites all over the country. Heads of departments and even local officials gain or lose their positions according to the party in power. Social conditions being what they are, both central and local authorities



FIRE AFTER A VOLCANIC ERUPTION



SPREADING FERTILIZER

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are for ever haunted by the fear of the insurrection of a docile and ill-informed populace that shows itself apt to run to ferocious extremes in protest when circumstances become too insupportable.

In this country of strictly centralized control the function of the police is merely to act as executors of Government authority. At election times, for example, they receive their instructions from Tokyo, and their supervision of meetings and other activities often amounts to deliberate obstruction of the opposite party. And at all times they have to act as the instruments of Governmental repression—the policy which is officially deemed best to cope with popular movements of any kind. The idea of a ‘bobby’ as a valued public servant and a friend in need would be entirely beyond the people of Nippon, and most of all beyond the police themselves. These bureaucratic little potentates may occasionally be seen strutting along a public thoroughfare, fully conscious of their official dignity. Officers are resplendent with silver braid on their dark military uniforms; all ranks wear a sword which dangles and flaps against the wearer’s legs, threatening with every movement to get tangled between his knees and to bring him down in a most undignified tumble. Walking, however, is not at all a common exercise with these policemen. They spend most of their time sitting in their local office, or in a little glass case at a street-corner, occupied in writing endless reports about something or other. For all these written records, however, they cannot be relied upon for the local information that one might expect from a policeman. At a police-box in Tokyo we were unable to get the whereabouts of some people who lived only a few yards away. And when we popped into the police-station in

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an out-of-the-way village to make some inquiries as to our route the boss bobby and his numerous staff were so surprised that they could hardly reply. Then they telephoned to their colleagues in the district, and a careful check was kept of our progress all down that valley. This, as we know, was only in keeping with the usual police procedure of haunting foreign residents wherever they go or stay. Even where the foreigner has a good knowledge of the language, and could answer inquiries for himself, no such direct methods are employed. Agents of the police come round to the servants and neighbours, and demand a full account of the foreign resident's current doings, with special reference to any visitors, recent absences, or other incidents to which suspicion may be attached.

A favourite excuse for closer supervision occurs if the white man is in possession of a revolver, a handy little weapon often kept for the reception of the very cheeky burglars who flourish in that country. It is the custom of these domineering gentry to break into a house by night—no difficult feat with so much wood and paper construction about—and to brandish a sword or similar lethal weapon over the terrified occupants, whom they deliberately awaken and bully with demands, not only for money and valuables, but often for food and wine, at the same time coolly forcing their victims to wait on them. These extraordinary methods are most common where the housebreaker knows he has only womenfolk to deal with, though men are also surprisingly submissive in such an emergency. Foreign missionary women sometimes find themselves thus molested, but the midnight marauders hesitate to tackle a white man, who has curious ideas of his own on the subject of cheeky thieves, and is given to

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prompt action with a pistol or a thick stick. It was a bad mistake on the part of one burglar to break into the boys' dormitory at the Canadian School in Kobe. He was last seen proceeding somewhat rapidly in another direction, followed gleefully by a number of seniors armed with baseball bats. At one time burglars were accorded special protection by law, and a householder could be called to account for any damage he might do to a nocturnal assailant, but that curious statute at least was changed, and since then the intruder cannot complain even if he is shot.

Although it is well known that if a foreign resident has a pistol it is only a safeguard against marauders by night, the possession of any such firearms is officially regarded as still another justification for treating the outsider with suspicion. Police spying is one more expression of the xenophobia with which the nation is still so firmly possessed. Although it sounds irritating, Europeans in Japan get used to it, and they even manage to extract a certain grim humour from it. Many are the stories of native policemen and their agents who have had their legs pulled in the most thorough fashion, though they themselves have been loftily unconscious of it: they cannot imagine that anyone would dare to commit such a breach against their dignity.

On one of our numerous hikes in the district round Nakamichi we strolled into the railway-station of a little neighbouring port town, with the intention of doing the rest of our return journey by train. While we were waiting we noticed several station officials in solemn conclave, with frequent glances in our direction. Presently one of them approached us, and without any of the usual ceremonious preliminaries demanded to know where we were going.

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Most sweetly and truthfully I informed him that we were not going anywhere, but coming back. To his further inquiries I replied in truly Oriental fashion, with the most charming politeness and non-committal rambling. He went back to join his colleagues in the office. Here evidently was a serious case, and a chance to distinguish themselves in leading to the arrest of this dangerous foreigner, most probably a red-hot agitator just landed in the country to destroy the nation and what-not besides. As Russian boats sometimes landed cargoes at that particular harbour, there was a local obsession against the penetration of Communistic agents and ideas. No one seemed to notice that this stranger spoke Japanese, and must have been in the country for some time. Still less had they ever noticed us passing through their little hamlet before, by train or on foot, though we had never actually boarded a train there.

Anyway, a station official was dispatched to warn the police. There is usually a policeman standing about, especially on arrival and departure of trains, but I noticed that the man who came hurrying up this time disposed himself very close to me as I went to the booking-office window for our tickets. Unfortunately for him, the disposition of my European bulk was contrived to prevent him from hearing the name of our destination. He followed us to the platform barrier, trying to get a peep at our tickets, but with no further success. Whether the station officials had already forgotten the destination of the tickets they had just issued, and punched, for these foreign suspects we did not know. Out of the tail of my eye I could see the anxious policeman still trailing us, apparently uncertain whether to accost us or go back for reinforcements. Just

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as we were getting into the train he at last began a series of questions, as to whether we were Russian, German, and so forth, to each of which the answer could be nothing more than a polite "No." To ask me straight out who I was, where we were going, or where we lived did not seem to occur to him. It goes without saying that a crowd had gathered, to watch the uniformed upholder of the national prestige about to apprehend this intruding enemy of Pacific peace. It must also be confessed that my wife was wickedly enjoying the scene from the carriage window. Presently, with a final extra dose of Oriental ceremonial, I took out the customary 'name-card,' inscribed in all the glory of my credentials as a Government official, and presented it to my interviewer, who at once went off into a performance of saluting, bowing, heel-clicking, and other compliments—to the disappointment of the crowd.

We sometimes suggested to the powers that be that it was rather a waste of time to go trailing a foreigner in Government employ, one who had lived for years in the district, and who might be considered as fairly well known. We knew, nevertheless, that we were always under suspicion, however unjustified and groundless. To begin with, no one could possibly understand our fondness for hiking; and for a wife to accompany her husband on such long walks was beyond all comprehension. Truth to tell, we two knew many parts of that district far better than the inhabitants themselves. Especially among the hills, we could never get any information beforehand as to routes, stopping-places, or other details. Maps were often vague, and we literally had to find our own way, sometimes where no white people had ever been before, and certainly where none of the local townspeople ever went. Although there



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were no actual strategic zones about, that part of the country had a certain military importance, in which we had not the faintest interest, of course. But it was known that I had been a British officer during the War, and it was therefore obvious to every one, except myself, that I could not possibly be anything else but a secret agent of British imperialistic interests, contriving to curb the honest activities of the Nipponese in the Far East. At the same time, humorously enough, the fact that we were interested in the international language, Esperanto, caused us to be suspected as agents of Russian Bolshevik machinations against Nippon. Truly a spy-mania can lead its devotees along some odd paths.

Such curious adventures of ours were only typical of the experiences of any foreigners up and down the country. Whether freshly arrived visitors or residents of long standing, they are liable to find themselves being trailed by the police, wherever they go or stay. The usual reason officially given is a desire for the welfare and safety of the foreigner, but xenophobia and spy-mania are the real explanation. It is considered patriotic on the part of civilians to shadow any foreigners, and then dash off with a report to the police-station, however imaginary the accusation may be. Even the most harmless and kindly missionaries, or highly responsible diplomats, find themselves dragged into the tedious experience of being arrested and interrogated at great length. And, with national fervour on the increase, the game of spy-hunting is becoming more popular.

Some more grim humour is shed over the disagreeable procedure by the astounding mentality betrayed by the guardians of the nation's integrity. An American who was

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accused of taking photos opened his camera, and the worthy policeman was quite satisfied because no photo was to be seen. An Englishman who was suddenly and unnecessarily asked to account for himself did so at even greater length than required, and when, without the flicker of an eyelid, he signed himself, in Japanese, as the Duke of California, this was, of course, accepted without demur or comment by his interrogator.

Although facetious foreigners venture to pull the legs of officious but unwitting officials, no such liberty would be ever dreamed of by the native populace. The Japanese citizen stands in awe and dread of the police; he would do anything rather than get mixed up in a case of inquiry, even as a witness, for, true to Oriental custom, it is only too easy for a witness to find himself in the position of a prisoner.

To anyone accustomed to the strict laws governing arrest, trial, and such legal matters the powers of the Japanese police must seem extraordinary, and the ways of justice most curious. Preliminary investigations take place, not before a magistrate, but at the office of the police, who may adopt any measures they think fit for extracting confessions or evidence from accused or witnesses. The utmost severity is exerted in dealing with political suspects or offenders. The authorities are in mortal terror of subversive activities, and will take any step to ferret out and stamp out political propaganda. No distinctions are drawn; even the most harmless cultural associations are viewed with suspicion. The quaint name of 'dangerous thought' is made to embrace every idea or system not strictly in accordance with the scheme officially laid down for legitimate public opinion. It is a term as

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vague, and as fraught with peril for anyone accused, as was medieval witchcraft.

From time to time the police receive orders to arrest so many persons in every district, not necessarily those suspected of political activity, but any individuals to make up the required number, in order to strike terror into those of whom the authorities themselves are so afraid, and to act as a salutary warning to all and sundry against the foolish mistake of having anything to do with 'dangerous thought'—whether the victims have done so or not. During one such nation-wide drive some of our own students, like many of their fellows in other places, were arrested, beaten, and then kicked out again, feeling themselves lucky not to be detained indefinitely, as happened to so many others. Young men of the student class are the special target of the police in this matter of 'dangerous thought,' though many others too are dragged into the net. As usual, the process is not a direct one. The police investigator will call at a man's house while he himself is out at his daily work. His wife or other relatives are intimidated into giving detailed information as to the 'suspect's' movements, friends, occupations, and so forth. Letters and other papers are taken, and a strict injunction to silence is placed upon those of the household interrogated. By a number of such visits the police agent can easily obtain enough 'evidence' for his purpose. He bluffs his victims into believing that he is already in possession of incriminating proofs. The wretched relatives or friends of a suspect would never think of querying the words or actions of the police; they can readily be made to give innocent statements which may be fatal to the man who has been marked down for sacrifice to official prestige—and panic.

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### 2. BY RAIL

However the State railways may be regarded as a form of public service, they are actually a means of indirect taxation under a strong Government monopoly. In spite of assiduous propaganda and newspaper advertising by the big American motor concerns represented in the country, decent roads remain conspicuous by their absence. Except where goods can be cheaply shipped along the coast, the Government-owned railways are the only means of transit, for passengers and freight, and are therefore in the comfortable position of being able to dictate transport charges and other conditions.

For the native population at least, railway travel is a mixture of delightful novelty, irksome necessity, and patriotic duty. It is not so long ago, when railways were first coming into use in Japan, that passengers left their wooden *geta* on the platform when getting into a train, just as if entering a house, and station officials had to go along the carriages, giving the footgear back to its owners. Even in some parts of the main island folks can still remember when they had no railway service. Some lines are not yet complete, and by many people a train is still regarded as a big new toy. For some time after the opening of Tokyo's one and only bit of underground railway the trains were crowded with excursionists and family parties, complete with lunch-boxes, spending hour after hour riding backward and forward over the short distance between the two stations.

In no other country, except perhaps in Russia, can one see such masses of people for ever on the move. Besides the many work-people who have to travel to and fro for

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hours every morning and evening, thousands of school-children and college students must buy season tickets and travel daily from one town to the next, while trainloads of youngsters pass them on the way to similar schools in the opposite places. In addition, the Government schools and other enforcedly patriotic associations frequently organize extensive and compulsory tours of nationally famous places, involving long journeys all over the country by day and night, contributing to State revenue and also to mortality statistics through sheer exhaustion from the existing travel conditions.

All day and every day the trains are crowded with passengers, some of them travelling long distances, but most of them only from one place to the next. The authorities boast that their trains are exceptionally punctual, but this claim must be taken for what it is worth. With a time-table allowing anything up to ten minutes' halt at many stations it should be easy to make up any time lost on the way. If, however, a train arrives several minutes late it stops there for the full period prescribed, and goes out just the same interval behind time. One gets into the habit of allowing an ample time-margin while travelling; of being prepared for anything to happen on the way. On our first visit home we found our handbags largely cluttered up with a variety of articles which we had found it necessary to take with us while travelling in Japan, but which were not needed in Western surroundings. Even on a day trip in England we had to rid ourselves of the feeling of having to be prepared for an enforced overnight stay at some unexpected spot—quite a usual precaution out East.

The approach to a railway-station is usually across an open, pebble-covered space, over which pedestrians and

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vehicles crunch and rattle. Trucks honk and screech loudly as they sweep in a lumbering curve into the goods-yard near by; men pulling wooden handcarts loaded with straw bales supply the usual contrast between old and new. People enter or leave the station festooned with parcels or bent double under a heavy load on the back. Lordly gentlemen step out of taxis, and receive the salutes of the red-capped porters, who obsequiously and efficiently attend to the baggage. The poor ricksha-men look despondently for the customers who are getting fewer and fewer in these days of motor competition. A tiny bus reaches its stopping-place in the station square, and from its interior emerges an incredible number of passengers, stepping down gingerly on their dangling *geta*, and marshalling anew their loads of bags and boxes, baskets and babies.

The station itself is a shack of unpainted wood, and, like all other such buildings, it looks perennially drab and weather-worn. Inside is a square space with a concrete floor, on which the shuffling wooden *geta* play an unceasing cacophony. *Fortissimo* is reached when this interior is also being used as a children's playground. Wooden seats are fixed along the walls, or placed back to back down the centre of the space. These are largely occupied by luggage, for which the floor is considered too dirty. Many people are standing or sitting about; some of them may have been here for several hours. Waiting is a common occupation; arrival to the minute is unusual, and time is of little consequence anyway. Some of them beguile the time in staring at the foreigner; he on his part finds interest in deciphering the wall-posters advertising places to be seen by rail, or, more still, in unobtrusively studying the varied types around him.

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A coolie wearing his conically shaped hat of plaited straw, a shaggy coat of rice-stalks, and muddy straw sandals, takes out his long-stemmed pipe, fills its tiny bowl with a wisp or two of tobacco from a little pouch, gets a light from an obliging neighbour's cigarette, with all due ritual of bowing and repeated thanks. He enjoys the few puffs from the glowing morsel, taps the pipe on the floor, and lights a second tiny bowlful from the embers of the first, smokes it, and puts away the whole outfit, all in less time than it would take a European to get his man-sized pipe well started.

A woman accompanied by three children finds it is time to get ready for the train. She swings the baby gently round on to her back, and ties it firmly on, with much turning and bending to get the long winding scarf into position, enveloping herself and infant at last in a vast cloak, and gathering up her many packages, tied up in the handy cloth *furoshiki*.<sup>1</sup> Her three-year-old daughter helps in the process, while a slightly older boy is still investigating the colourful joys on the stall which sells sweets, toys, newspapers, tobacco, and other travel requisites.

A porter goes by, carrying three handbags over one shoulder and two lumpy baskets in his hand. These are a trifle for him, although he looks on the weedy side, with none of the stocky sturdiness of his European counterpart. (We wonder how these men contrive to maintain such a sleek uniform—close-fitting tunic, knee-breeches, and stockings, all of thin black cotton, bright red cap, and the lightest of rubber or leather shoes.) The luggage which this porter is carrying belongs to an elderly gentleman who has just paid off his taxi, and comes hurrying into the station,

<sup>1</sup> A large square of silk or cotton material, used for carrying all sorts of things.

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with a great clatter of *geta* and flapping of *kimono* skirts. He glances at the clock, dashes to the booking-office, changes his mind, peers at the time-table, then goes off in search of the porter.

Three Army officers saunter in, and nonchalantly return the salutes of the policeman on duty, a couple of disengaged porters, a group of schoolboys who spring to attention, together with those of a number of soldiers, complete with mouth-masks, returning to the near-by garrison town.

After long and patient waiting a feverish haste suddenly takes possession of travellers, as they approach the booking-office or the platform barrier. Anyone who politely waits his turn will find some one roughly pushing in front of him. It is the usual story; these Orientals, who had such strict formal rules in ancient ceremony, are lost among so many new features in everyday life.

Meanwhile a loud-speaker is droning the announcement of a train's arrival. Passing the ticket-inspector like grains of sand through an hour-glass, people scuttle along the platform, up the steps, and over the bridge. The station is built on the plan that the platform nearest the entrance shall be reserved for the shunting of goods-trains, while those most used by passengers are farthest away. The arriving train can be seen long before it draws in; the driver shuts off steam away down the line, and several minutes elapse before he has finally brought his crawling charge to rest. A station official with a megaphone nasally and repeatedly exhorts people to wait till all arriving passengers have descended. This takes some time, as the carriages are all of the lengthwise pattern, with a narrow passage down the middle and a door only at each end. The steps are high above the platform, and the wooden sandals make



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for slow and cautious movement. The most heavily laden passengers naturally get down first; it is nothing uncommon for one to get jammed in the doorway, and have to go astern to get loose. Small children look with leisurely trepidation at the steep descent; their mothers, with the habitual load of baby and baggage, contrive to get down somehow. The carriage doorway, like the ticket barrier or any other narrow space, is the spot chosen by dear old ladies to take a touching farewell of each other, with many bows and protestations of eternal amity. Before the descending stream ceases the impatient upward rush of departing passengers begins, just in time to meet the last emerging stragglers, who have either forgotten their destination or had to turn back for something.

Gradually the would-be passengers filter inward, and hurriedly find themselves places before they are crowded out. As we enter by the door at the end we get the impression already briefly described. The long low carriage has a central passage and crosswise seats in pairs on each side, something like the arrangement of the newer main-line coaches in England, or what are called the day-cars in America, except that there is not the least provision for what we should call comfort. As all rolling-stock must be made to fit the narrow-gauge lines, accommodation seems terribly cramped to the Westerner, though it is the only sort known to the diminutive Japanese, who, as we know, can fold themselves away in odd corners. To us there seems a total lack of head- and elbow-room. The seats themselves are low and narrow, and what padding there is does not prevent us from becoming uncomfortably aware of the hard front edge. In the space of about three feet between the window and the central gangway there is

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supposed to be seating for two persons, and the sections containing two such pairs sitting facing each other are so limited that knees would touch if native thigh-bones were of normal length. The backs of the seats are vertical and of plain wood, about four feet high from the carriage floor, and the general effect is that of people tucked away in double rows of open boxes all down the length of the coach.

Our train fills rapidly; for some time it is a scene of people scurrying hither and thither, finding places and changing them, getting themselves and their belongings deposited for the journey. It is quite common to see a passenger place a heavy box or bag on a seat and remain standing beside it. Women with babies on their backs often prefer to stand, at least for a short trip, to save the trouble of loosing and refitting all the wrappings. Hulking men sprawl over a couple of seats, or occupy still more space with their luggage, safe from any remonstrance in this country where such boorish conduct can prevail. Women and girls take it for granted that they may have to stand; they hardly venture to approach a section of seats even partially occupied by men.

At the windows, which open by sliding upward, the platform vendors are doing a busy last-minute trade, selling rice lunches in small wooden boxes; mysterious confections, bottles of hot green tea, coffee, or milk; fruit, newspapers, cigarettes. Frequently groups of people are gathered on the platform opposite certain carriage windows, for the important ceremony of seeing off some relative, friend, or, maybe, distinguished visitor. So important is this business of seeing one's guests safely off the premises or out of the district that the Japanese language has a special verb for it.

We used to think that Egypt was the country where a

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train could pull out of a station and still leave the platform crowded, but in Japan too the numbers of people engaged in the ancient and Oriental custom of so thoroughly saying farewell may run into hundreds, making a welcome addition to the revenue at five cents or more a head. If the departing guest is one of sufficient importance the station staff will add their respects to the cries of "*Banzai!*" from the multitude. In any case, as a matter of daily routine, the station-master or his accredited representative gravely watches each train go out, he and the guard exchanging the formal military salute, together with the stiff bow from the hips.

To observe a train as it pulls slowly out gives an interesting cross-section of local humanity. The uniformed driver and stoker man the powerful-looking locomotive, ready for whatever difficulties there may be on the switchback course among the mountains ahead. In the luggage van the various packages are already being slung about and sorted for their destinations. The second-class carriage looks rather comfortable, with its roomier seats upholstered in dark blue plush. In these days of widespread penury, however, very few people can afford to travel even second; most of the seats are empty. On the other hand, the long series of third-class coaches is packed with people, sitting close in the box-like sections or patiently standing. The luggage racks overhead are piled high with bags and baskets, coats, umbrellas, scarves, and other articles of clothing. Here and there net bags of fruit and other objects dangle and sway with the movement of the train.

When the trip is well begun it is not long before a lethargy creeps over the passengers. Conversation languishes, newspapers and magazines droop, and even on a half-hour journey one may see the majority of one's

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fellow-travellers either somnolent or fast asleep. On longer journeys people curl themselves up on the yard-long seat, with their head on the wooden arm-rest, and slumber steadily in spite of the incessant jolting on the bumpy way. Diversions are made by the frequent stops, when the carriage is more or less emptied, and refilled with a fresh batch of local passengers. Meal-times cause general activity. Out come the *bento*-boxes, containing, as we have seen, a supply of cold boiled rice with a little fish, seaweed, and cooked or pickled vegetables in tiny slices. These boxes are made of thin wood, six inches or so square and a couple of inches deep. With the chopsticks provided big lumps of rice are dug out and quickly engulfed. Other titbits are deftly picked out and gobbled, with the usual hissing and smacking of lips which are the signs of enjoyment in eating. Draughts of green tea are used to swill down the solid food, as well as being applied to a vigorous washing round of the teeth and mouth generally. Then the diner settles down to the important process of tooth-picking, accompanied by the indispensable sounds of sucking and digestive gurgling. The toothpick may still be protruding from the corner of his mouth when at last he subsides into sleep and silence.

The floor is the natural resting-place for empty lunch-boxes, tea-jars, coffee- or milk-bottles, fruit-skins, cigarette-ends, scraps of paper, burned matches, and miscellaneous litter. At intervals on the journey a sweeper works right along the train with brush and shovel, collecting all the rubbish in big heaps for ejection at the next stopping-place. As he enters the doorway at the end of each long carriage he doffs his cap, and in the nasally falsetto voice employed for such official proclamations he announces to the Honourable Company in general that he, their unworthy servant,

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is about to perform the process of sweeping. The passengers, in this brief respite from their own life of toil, thoroughly enjoy the experience of having some one to clean up after them. The nonchalant scattering of litter is still a problem in countries where accommodation is much more comfortable than here. From time to time the Nipponese authorities express grave concern at the quantity of rice that is wasted by people who do not empty their *bento*-boxes when travelling by rail. Various remedies are suggested—the making of smaller boxes, of various sizes to suit various appetites, and so on. Statistics are solemnly drawn up, showing just what fraction of the nation's limited food-supply is represented by the scraps thrown away with the *bento*-boxes.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Economics*

#### I. RICE AND SILK

WHEREVER we travel in this island country we shall find that, with a few exceptions, landscapes are limited to certain types. Most of the railways are necessarily laid along the narrow coastal plain; nowhere can we get far away from the sea on one side and the great central mountain ranges on the other. In some places, where the rocky slopes come down sheer to the water's edge, the train runs through an endless succession of tunnels, with intermittent views of pebbly shores, craggy headlands, and fishing villages, clusters of timber-and-daub huts with unkempt thatch, ever reminiscent of southern seas. In fair weather the level expanse of the sea reflects an infinite variation of shades in blue and green. Islands appear to float vaguely between sea and sky; the white sails of fishing-boats gleam pleasantly in the sun, making it difficult to imagine what a roaring death-trap these offshore deeps may become in rougher weather. The itinerant fishmonger, trudging inland every morning with his stock in two baskets slung from a pole over his shoulder, must often tell his door-to-door clients that fish is dearer to-day owing to last night's storm, incidentally adding how many boats and men were lost.

Inland our view is bounded by the foot-hills, along whose base are dotted villages, with the familiar roofs of thatch or dark grey tile, plaster walls, and thick clumps of trees or bamboo, among which may rise the larger mass of a

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temple, or the peculiar *torii* which marks the entrance to a Shinto shrine. All round us, from hills to sea, stretch the rice-fields in an endless series of little patches, even climbing in a succession of tiny terraces as far as possible up the sides of the valleys. The plots are so small because each one must be quite level. They are surrounded by a bank of earth to hold up the water whenever the ground must be flooded. About the only task which nature spares these hard-worked peasants is that of irrigation, as a plentiful supply of water descends to them from the rainy mountains, and can be conveniently stored in open reservoirs close at hand. Only at times of exceptional summer drought must they set to work with treadmill water-wheels and other crude contrivances, to raise the necessary water from any *streams which have not run dry*.

During the winter the fields lie empty, and the country people occupy themselves with work about the house. Early in spring they start the long season's toil, first of all chopping through each stump of last year's stubble with a long-handled hoe, or with two iron blades fitted underneath a pair of straw sandals. The ground is then turned over with an implement like an overgrown rake, or with a primitive plough drawn by a single horse. Water is run on to each small plot, and gradually the whole area is churned up into a soggy, slushy mass. It is at this moment that our old friends the honey-carts are most in evidence; the fields are dotted with huge wooden vats in which the natural fertilizer is stored to mature, and from which it is afterwards thrown by buckets on to the fields, and dug or trodden into the deep sticky mud.

Meanwhile the rice-seeds have been set in special little flooded plots, adorned with strings and fluttering rags to

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scare off the birds. The tiny green shoots push their way up through mud and water, and when large enough they are transplanted in the paddy-fields already prepared for them. Curious wooden frames like skeleton hexagonal prisms are rolled over the muddy surface, marking it off into squares of about a foot, and at each intersection of the lines a young plant is thrust into the soft ground. Day by day the planted area extends, until miles and miles are covered with the faint green shoots, in the little banked-up plots of muddy water.

Week by week the whole expanse gets greener, as the rice-plants grow bigger. It is a period of incessant labour for the cultivators, who must keep on stirring up the liquid mud. Some just use their hands and feet, others the big pronged rake. There is also a simple little machine consisting of two bladed wheels; this is pushed along the narrow space between the rows of plants, to churn up the slush as required.

Whatever the process or implements used, the tillers of the soil must stand or move about up to their knees in the water and slime, all day and every day through the sultry summer months, ceaselessly making the same movements of hand and foot, and as soon as they have thus tended all their little plots they start all over again. Small wonder that one rarely sees them lift their eyes up to the hills, gleaming silver in the morning light or delicately rose and lilac after set of sun. But, in spite of their monotonous life, they are not without some interest and enjoyment. As evening shadows signal the end of the day's work the sun-bronzed rustic climbs out of his toilsome mud-patch, washes off the grime in the nearest ditch, and perhaps sits on the bank for a rest and a whiff of his Lilliputian pipe. His



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fellow-toilers homeward bound will stop for a word or a chat, most likely about the progress of the daily work in hand. Even a heavily laden old crone may be seen plucking a wild flower or two, to place before the figure of Buddha at a little wayside shrine.

In spite of rural dialects, a foreigner can get into conversation with these rough peasants, and learn something of the agrarian craft into which generations of these hard-working people are born. Almost certainly they will ask about crops in Europe, and to them the cultivation of wheat sounds as strange as rice-growing would do to an English farmer. So far from adopting any churlish attitude towards a stranger, these simple country folk seem more friendly disposed than the general run of town-dwellers. Perhaps their toilsome life on the land makes them forget the national duty of detesting everything foreign. Cries of "Outsider!" and other witless demonstrations come from the school-children, who are still more or less in contact with the leaders of national thought.

The rural year wears on, and in September the summer heat begins to decline down on the steamy coastal plains, which are by now an almost uninterrupted expanse of luxuriant rice-fields, all filled with the thick-growing plants. If the season has been a good one the stem-tops droop over gracefully with the heavy grains, which are, of course, not in a closely packed ear like wheat, but in a spray more like oats or feathery grass. The ground is allowed to dry as the crop ripens. Presently the fields are dotted with the harvesters, stooping figures almost hidden among the yard-high plants, as they work along the rows, using a small sickle to cut each bunch of stems a few inches above the ground, laying them together, then tying them up with

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straw into miniature sheaves, which they leave standing, head downward, at convenient intervals. Towards evening they gather the small sheaves into larger bundles, and carry them on their backs, or by means of a light yoke slung across the shoulders, to the drying-screens. These consist of a number of bamboo or wooden poles about eight or ten feet high, set firmly in the ground at intervals along the edge of the path or field, with straw ropes tied horizontally right along the row of poles, at successive levels above the ground. Each sheaf is divided into a sort of inverted V, the point being held together by the binding-straw, and thus hung on the screen, with the two sides of the V astride the rope, and the ears of rice hanging downward.

As the peasants toil along row after row, field after field, the landscape gradually loses its thick green carpet, and reverts to its appearance of muddy grey, dotted only with the clumps of stubble, which will remain till next spring. The autumn countryside is now lined with the innumerable drying-screens, on which the rice-sheaves rapidly change to a dusty yellow tint. Like the cruciform stakes on which the mown hay is placed in some parts of Europe, these high screens seem an ideal way of keeping the crop high up out of wet and mud in a region of frequent rainfall. Exposed to the maximum of sun and wind, the rice soon ripens and hardens. It is then taken down and carried off again, this time perhaps on handcarts along field paths and roads, to some convenient spot near the farmhouse where threshing is done. Nowadays one rarely sees the original and most primitive operation in which each bunch of stems is drawn through a large iron comb; the grains are thus dragged out of the ears, to fall in a heap on a straw mat below. The most common method likewise still depends

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on human labour. The threshing-machines are small box-like affairs, at which a man or a woman stands working a wooden treadle and thrusting the little sheaves against a revolving wooden drum studded with spikes, which tear out the grains and throw them into a heap on the straw matting spread underneath. The grain is further winnowed in a large hand-sieve, and when finally ready for sale it is packed into straw bales, and then carried on the lumbering wooden handcarts to the nearest market. So ends the annual cycle of the peasants' toil, and for the rest of the year, except in those parts of the country where a further cereal crop is grown, they retire to their rustic dwellings, to overhaul their primitive implements and to make what saleable articles they can from straw, bamboo, and other simple materials.

Theirs is indeed a hard life, a hand-to-mouth existence. In this overcrowded country the agricultural system is such that most of the peasants can till only miserably small plots of land, for which rent is paid in the equivalent of rice. Many of the land proprietors are wealthy enough, but their small farming tenants are chronically poor. For years they have carried on a vain struggle against the economic paradox that the better their crop the less it is worth, for an increased supply means a fall in price. At the same time, when it comes to buying their few simple necessities from town or village, they find the cost of such commodities for ever rising. All over the country debts have been piling up beyond all hope of redemption. Agrarian reform is a favourite cry of the political parties, but for the most part the country people are left to carry on as best they may. They could do with some recognition more material than the oft-repeated compliment that they are the backbone and

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mainstay of the nation, a statement which is certainly true. In spite of the fact that the mountainous character of these islands reduces the arable area to a comparatively small fraction, which can hardly be increased in future, and although there are very few crops besides rice, it is a basic economic factor that the labours of the peasantry make the nation practically independent of imports from abroad for its food-supply. In face of war, blockade, or even loss of overseas territory, Japan would not find it difficult to meet the demands of its population for rice, vegetables, fish, and most other items of the meagre national diet.

Any journey inland will give us a good idea of the limitation of arable areas, as well as of the way in which every available patch of ground is utilized. For long distances up the broader valley which our train ascends the more level ground is covered with rice-fields, which are continued up the slopes and minor valleys on both sides, just as far as the ground can be terraced and persuaded to yield a crop. If we penetrated farther up those little valleys on foot we should find many a spot where plots of ground had been thus levelled, cultivated, perhaps abandoned, and once more reclaimed.

Wherever we see fields of bright green mulberry-plants during the summer we know that we are in a region of the great national product, silk. The small beginnings of the 'honourable worms' have a curious appearance. Dealers buy and sell little cards on which are rings of lifeless-looking specks—the eggs from which the silkworms are hatched. The rearing of these important little creatures is an exacting operation. They must be protected from changes of temperature and other atmospheric conditions; mulberry-leaves

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for their food must be cut at certain times, not too dry and not too moist. The silkworms are kept in large square, shallow baskets of bamboo laths. These baskets are slid on to racks in special sheds round the grower's house. To an outsider one silkworm looks pretty much the same as another, but if one of them happens to get out and is found crawling about the grower knows, from its growth and appearance, which basket it belongs to. Entrance on the chrysalis stage heralds the end of these voracious little lives.

Late in the summer the cocoons are collected and taken to the nearest marketing centre. Along the country roads and field paths the peasants are seen converging on the railway-station. From the usual pole slung over the shoulder hangs a bag of very clean white cloth, containing the precious load of cocoons. As we listen to these rough rustics discussing qualities and prices among themselves, or if we get into conversation with them, we find that they are experts in their own line. A stranger might go so far as to notice that some cocoons are white and some yellow, and that they are all more or less the same size. But these farm johnnies are familiar with a dozen other details, showing grade and value. They can tell off-hand how many cocoons of a certain type go to a pound of silk; how many would be needed to make a *kimono* like the one worn by the gentleman over there in the corner—and even discuss the quality of his *kimono* in particular. They take great care of their loads of cocoons, keeping them in the shade, opening up the bags and fanning them from time to time.

An up-country silk exchange is a centre of picturesque movement at the hour of daily sales. As each grower arrives his cocoons are carefully poured into a large open basket, and he receives a numbered wooden tally. Those

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who arrive earliest will naturally have their numbers called first when the sale opens. Gradually the floor space becomes filled with baskets, the men standing by them, gently turning over the cocoons now and then, and constantly fanning to keep them cool in the sultry summer atmosphere inside the crowded building.

At one end of the room there is a large semicircular platform of smooth wooden boards, about three feet above the floor, and on this raised space each basketful of cocoons will be inspected before sale. At opening time the auctioneer and his assistants take their places, squatting at low desks at the back of the platform. Members of the exchange who wish to make purchases stand on the concrete floor round the front edge of the raised platform. The auctioneer claps his hands, the buyers repeat the signal, and they all chant a little ditty before starting business.

As the number of each lot is called the cocoons are tipped out of the basket and spread over the smooth boards. The buyers pick up a few and examine them. Each member is provided with a sort of overgrown bobbin, on the upper end of which his own name is permanently printed in the usual Chinese characters. The concave under-side of the bobbin has a black surface, on which the bidder chalks the price he offers for the lot in question. Then he slides his bobbin across the boards to the auctioneer, who checks over the figures and announces the highest bidder. The cocoons are swept over to one side, where the grower watches the weighing closely, and receives a voucher for the price. This procedure continues, until the last grower or buyer disappears from the floor.

Spinning is usually done near where the silk is grown, such as in the districts of Kyoto and Nagano. Most of the

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work is done by girls, whose deftness is essential in the handling of the slender threads. In the first process they immerse the cocoons a few at a time in a basin of hot water to destroy the chrysalis inside and loosen the surrounding layers of fine silky threads. With quick movements of their long hardwood chopsticks the girls catch up the filmy strands, which are hardly visible to an unpractised eye, and start them on their way through the stages of spinning and winding on to frames and spools.

One cannot imagine fabrics more lovely than Japanese silks, whose texture and patterns are of the very finest. Shop-window displays of *kimono* material are as exquisite as they are commonplace. Especially on a holiday or at a festival, humanity presents a gay and glorious picture in the sunshine. But although silk is so widely used in Japan, by far the greatest part of the nation's output of silk yarn is exported, mostly to the United States. At the port of departure consignments of silk go through exacting tests certifying the quality, a precaution of considerable importance to the maintenance of trade in this valuable commodity. It is carried by the fastest liners across the Pacific, and by special non-stop goods-trains to New York, where time is an important factor in market prices.

### 2. A POOR COUNTRY

While on furlough trips some years ago I followed my incorrigible habit of keeping in touch with the world's work, by lingering observantly round factories, harbours, and other busy spots, both on the way and at home. In Lancashire especially my Japanese address ensured a very cool reception to my requests for visit permits, until officials

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felt satisfied that I was not a technical spy, much less an agent for the sixpenny socks and shilling shirts then appearing from the East.

Since again returning to Europe I have been surprised at the number of people who have a vague idea of Japan as a powerful and formidable commercial rival to Western countries. When asked for more precise details to substantiate such an idea they quote the usual headlines about cotton goods; some of them get as far as mentioning rubber boots or vacuum flasks, but beyond that there is very little knowledge of Japan's curious position in the business world.

Such vagueness among Western people may perhaps be excused, in view of the haziness which envelops these matters even among the Japanese themselves. Professors of economics show a marked preference for lofty theories rather than for elementary facts right before their eyes. Our budding young business men could talk by the hour on financial policies, bimetallism, technocracy, and other branches of their advanced studies, but they displayed an astonishing ignorance of simple concrete facts which vitally concern their country's trade.

In classwork I often used paragraphs from the business page of newspapers, dealing with the activities of well-known firms, staple products and occupations, and other suitable subjects. National trade returns were a hardy annual, cropping up in January as soon as the figures were out. My students would marvel that a foreigner could reel off the statistics for several years—Japan's imports and exports, trade balance, invisible income, staple items, increases and decreases, and so forth. For the moment, in their pride at anyone's taking such an interest in Their Country, they would forget to be jealous of an outsider



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who knew something that they did not. But one thing I never dared to do—draw any comparison between Japan and other countries in world trade, for, as a matter of cold fact and figures, the nation occupies a very mediocre position, not only in the total size of its trade, but also in the nature of the commodities of which this consists.

To anyone who has no particular reason to keep in touch with statistics it may come as a surprise that on a basis of trade volume, averaged over a number of years, Japan can show only a small fraction compared with the United States, Great Britain, Germany, or France, and she ranks only seventh in the list, along with countries like Italy. On a ratio of trade volume to population Japan sinks still further—to tenth place, down with the other Asiatic competitors, India and China. Moreover, an examination of the items composing her trade indicates an economic situation which might well be described as precarious. It is impossible to place Japan with the world's great manufacturers; on the other hand, she cannot be classified as one of the great sources of the raw materials most needed for manufacture.

Japan, still so largely an agricultural nation, has only two considerable products, rice and natural silk. The former just about meets the demand in the home food-supply; the latter, as previously noted, is practically all sent to the United States. It is an extraordinary situation that well over one-third of Japan's annual export total is accounted for by this one luxury article, which depends entirely on the demand in one single country, where its price has fallen enormously in recent years. The only other export of importance is manufactured cotton, of which the world has heard so much. Here again, however, closer inspection reveals certain ambiguous features. As Japan is not a cotton-growing country

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she must depend on imported supplies, one quarter of which must be kept for home consumption. The sudden growth of her cotton sales is due to several abnormal factors. Whatever the quality may be, cheapness is especially important at a time of economic depression. This cheapness is obtained, as we shall see, by means of an almost incredible social system and a low standard of living, as well as by debasing the *yen* rate of exchange.

The two textiles, natural silks and manufactured cotton, go to make up more than half the total of Japanese export value. Artificial silk is being turned out in increasing quantities, but within the country itself it is regarded suspiciously as something not quite patriotic. A large proportion of the imported wool is needed to meet the increasing home demand for hosiery, underclothing, and similar articles, usually with a liberal admixture of cotton, coarse in texture and of poor durability.

The rest of the export list shows a miscellany of items of much smaller value, such as sugar, flour, paper, glass, pottery, toys, buttons, green tea, seaweed, and other subsidiary commodities which hardly appear conspicuously on the balance-sheets of great trading nations. On the other hand, Japan's list of imports betrays the nation's lack of essential raw materials. The Japanese are fond of talking about "Our Poor Country," without realizing just how poor it is. For the needs of its home population, and for the maintenance of what industries exist, the country must buy in large supplies of iron and other metals, oil-fuel, rubber, and other materials, apart from those intended for manufacture and re-export. It is true that copper is a national product; its common use in roofing, piping, and other construction almost suggests that Japan is still in some sort

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of a German engineering agent who travels in the Far East, demonstrating and selling his firm's flour-milling machines. When he delivered the latest model on one occasion he was asked, as usual, to show exactly how it worked. Not only the mechanics but every one else, from office-boy to manager, had a try at starting the new toy. A month later, when Herr Kraemer again called round that way, they proudly showed him a second machine, complete with paint and varnish, of exactly the same appearance as the one sent from Europe. There was just one little point they wanted him to explain: the duplicate copy, for some strange reason, would not work. He could guess why, even before he looked inside. The whole point of the original machine lay in one intricate part, made of an alloy whose secret was locked safely away with only one or two persons on the other side of the world. And here the local lads had duplicated that particular part with something made from scrap metal.

Such examples are not mere idle stories, spread with the jealous intention of disparaging Japanese ways of doing things. They are corroborated and duplicated by many competent observers up and down the country. When machines are imported from abroad the transaction often includes the services of a skilled adviser sent out by the foreign firm, like the spoon given away with a pound of tea, but infinitely more valuable. There is a melancholy uniformity in the experience of these long-suffering specialists. Coming as they do from engineering circles at home, accustomed to methods of accuracy, responsibility, and working to a schedule, they display endless patience with the leisurely, slapdash ways of the Orient. By the very nature of the exactness demanded by their profession, however, they are

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almost foredoomed to the fate of weary disappointment, even more than other foreigners whose occupations allow them some latitude among such haphazard surroundings.

The foreign technical adviser, like others on a visit of long or short duration, is often welcomed by a ceremonial deputation and a banquet, whose impressive charm is exceeded only by the elaborate ceremony with which he will ultimately be bidden farewell. On the official job in hand, however, some unpleasant surprises await him. The chief business seems to be endless discussion, freely shared by everybody—manager, clerks, office-boys, dusty and dirty workmen, even messengers dropping in from other firms. Individual responsibility is not the fashion; heads of departments go off into consultation at the slightest excuse. Those in nominal charge of technical matters have no doubt accomplished prodigious theoretical studies for their diploma, and so achieved their ambition to sit for evermore at an office table and shuffle papers about. It is beneath their dignity to get into overalls and go out on the job to see what is being done or to show the workmen how to do it, even if their own practical knowledge extends so far.

And so the foreign engineer, day after day and month after month, is astounded and exasperated by the hit-or-miss all round. The two phrases he will unmistakably remember from endless repetition are "*Chotto matte*" and "*Shikata ga nai!*" The accuracy of fitting is problematical; fine adjustments may or may not be made. If the special material for foundation bedding, supporting framework, or other construction is not to hand something else is substituted, whether suitable or not. The local experts hit on the ingenious idea of increasing the output of a machine

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by pushing its load and speed far beyond anything its designer ever intended. A truck meant to carry two tons at twenty miles an hour is made to do thirty or more with a load of three tons over shocking roads. It is considered a waste of money to buy the prescribed fuel and lubrication or to carry out maintenance and repairs, as these would decrease profits. If anything or everything goes wrong the blame can, of course, be readily thrown on to "inferior foreign workmanship"—a pretty little tale that is often told.

In whatever capacity the foreign adviser may have been invited to the country he must keep one fact well in mind: the Japanese already know far better than anything he can tell them; their chief aim will be to impress upon him their own indisputable and immeasurable superiority and their kindly condescension in having him there at all. For they belong essentially to that mental type which regards insistence on reputation as of far more importance than actual accomplishment. In their anxious haste, their dread of being looked upon as inferior, they make the most extraordinary claims to achievements which need not and cannot be expected of them. Among inventive Western nations there is rivalry enough for honour and reputation, but in Japan they credit themselves with inventions and discoveries that took place when they were still wrapped in medieval slumber. On the authority of a history text-book which states that "the first railway was opened in Japan in 1872" it has been known for them to deny the existence of railways in Europe before that date.

In spite of their colossal vanity and hasty blunders, one must surely sympathize with the Japanese in the unkindly fate that so often seems to dog them. Even when taking

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up the latest means of communication, in the air, they were confronted by a difficulty of which they had never suspected the existence. Some peculiarity in their brain and nervous system militates against the stability of the Japanese as aviators, or even as drivers of motor-vehicles. After seeing Japanese babies tied on their mothers' backs, their little heads bouncing and rolling in all directions, one might imagine that henceforth they would be inured to all sudden movements, but medical evidence shows that this is not the case. Commercial and military aviation is carried on in and around these mountainous islands, but for various reasons Nipponese airmen are not likely to distinguish themselves in the flying world. At the time when so much was being heard of hardened Western flyers who were trying to cross the Pacific patriotic Japanese determined to get on the front page of the news, in spite of poor experience and equipment. A 'plane had to be bought from abroad; money was collected, even from poor school-children; elaborate preparations were made, and congratulatory celebrations were planned. Unfortunately the 'plane had been assembled in such a way as to give it a bad habit of cocking up its tail, and the last we ever heard of it was that a lump of lead had been added in an attempt to restore equilibrium.

Soon after we arrived in Japan I bought a tie-clip made in Kyoto, a simple little thing, but a good example of what they can do there. It is both useful and ornamental; the design is in damascene, an imported art, but beautifully executed. The tiny teeth fit together with microscopic accuracy; the spring and hinge work as perfectly as when the clip was first bought. I have worn it continually for all these years, a small emblem of Japanese handiwork at its best.

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The notoriety for shoddy work that the Japanese have inflicted on themselves is most exasperating to those sympathetic observers who know what can really be achieved. One wishes they (and the Russians too, incidentally) would leave off telling the world what they are going to do with X, Y, Z, and get on quietly and methodically from A, B, C. If ever their natural skill is extensively applied to industry, then their competition in goods of quality will justifiably make the world sit up and take notice.

### 4. BUSINESS

As we have observed, trying to sell something is a favourite occupation in Japan. In the whole country, even including the agricultural 50 per cent. of the population and the hordes of clerks and other officials, the number of people engaged in trade has been worked out at one in six—emphatically the highest in the world, and far ahead of its nearest rival, Switzerland, which has only about one in twenty busy trying to make a profit out of the rest or each other.

It might take Western people a long time to get any idea of just how business does shuffle along in the East. Foreign merchants out there would find it very comical if it were not so harassing. In some of the biggest native firms modern methods have been introduced, but in the vast majority of cases there is little or no place for those favourite Western maxims “Go straight to the point!” “Get on with the job!” “Mind your own business!” Why hurry the matter, anyway? Why not play about with it, enjoy it, weigh its merits and demerits, become thoroughly chummy with it, and bring in a whole lot of other matters as well?

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If you walk into a Japanese bank to get a cheque cashed you must not expect anything so humdrum as you would get at home. If and when one of the stool-sitters happens to take an interval from tea-drinking, smoking, or reading the paper long enough to catch sight of you, he may condescend to take your cheque, scan it, ask you what you want to do with it, and without bothering to listen to your reply he will hand the cheque to another stool-sitter at the same table. The process is repeated again and again, except that one of the accomplices may ask you whether you received the cheque by hand or by registered letter, and whether the sender uses oblong envelopes or square. If you are in a position to reply in fluent Japanese you can let yourself in for a long discussion on this, that, and the other, but if you take shelter behind Occidental brevity or your ignorance of the vernacular they will see that it is no use trying to start their favourite pastime, discussing. They summon one of the seventy-nine office-boys or -girls on the staff, and send your cheque away to the next table, where it must be circulated, scrutinized, inverted, reverted and commented upon, then sent to another table, and so on, and on, and on. Each clerk with any sense of responsibility will stamp your document with his *han*, the curious little seal, something like an Arabic *khethm*, with the owner's name carved in Chinese characters, and kept in a small case along with a supply of red wax, called *han-meat*. Every citizen worthy of the name carries his *han* with him, to use as a signature to the many official documents which may confront him at any moment in this super-bureaucratic country. As these little seals are kept in large stocks by the *han-maker*, classified in small boxes labelled "Yamada," "Hamada," "Haneda," "Hanada," "Kaneda," "Kanada,"



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"Kishimura," "Nishimura," "Yoshimura," "Tamura," "Kanemura," and all the rest of the usual family names, one is left wondering how they can safeguard anyone's signature.

Meanwhile, at intervals during your weary wait, you hear the *tick-tick-tick-a-tick-tick-tick-tick, tick, tick, tick-tick-tick, tick-tick* of the indispensable *soroban*, as one mathematician after another counts over the amount of your cheque, its serial number and date, to verify whether the figures 14 really do come to 14, or possibly something else. If you have signed the cheque with an ordinary pen they will most likely demand that it shall be stamped with a *han*, and if you happen to have used one of these seals on the cheque they will probably decline to cash it unless signed with a pen, and you will have to send the thing back to the sender and start all over again. We knew a man from Sydney who stated that he got some business done at a Japanese bank in thirty-six minutes, but he had no supporting evidence, and he was fond of telling impossible stories, anyway.

A certain amount of poetic licence may have crept into this prosaic description of cashing a cheque, but the main principles are there all right, as any white man out there will tell you.

If you want to dispatch an inland letter at the post-office, that is easy enough, provided you catch the clerk napping before he can start asking funny questions. But just try sending a parcel, say, to Manchester *via* America, and you will think that cashing a cheque at a bank is as greased lightning by comparison. Parcel's contents, value, sender's purpose, reason, or motive, next of kin, grandfather's occupation if any, and if not, why not?—these are the commonplace details you take in your stride with the first

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batch of documents to be filled up. First one clerk will begin, then two and upward in geometrical progression will carry on, the good work of showing that your package—*tick-tick-tick, tick, tick, tick, tick-a-tick-tick*—is too heavy—*tick, tick, tick-tick-tick-tick*—too long—*tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick*—in fact, it is far too small and light to be reckoned as a parcel at all. By the time these matters have been thoroughly debated some one, or, rather, six of them, will have suddenly discovered that the official route to Manchester is *via* Peshawar, and it takes a lot more time to settle that. Closing hour is long past, but that matters not to Nipponese engaged in discussion. The night shadows gather, so do the night-duty men, and one of them detects a mistake in the address, flagrantly overlooked by previous scrutinizers. The name Manchester should be written Mancester, like Leicester, Worcester, and other English names he learned at school, before he went to college and graduated in economics, ethics, and Chinese classics. You tell them you were born in Manchester, and lived there for over twenty years, so you ought to know how the name is spelled. Everybody agrees—yes, you ought to know; then more's the pity that you don't. Here's a Japanese official knows better than you how to write the name of your own native place, and he will stick to his version, because otherwise he would suffer the indignity known among Orientals as 'losing face,' and that would be an irretrievable disaster. Here they can make a thousand mistakes, or the same glaring mistake a thousand times, and resort to all manner of barefaced terminological adaptations of the truth in attempting concealment, but to admit an error—no, it simply isn't done.

If and when your parcel does get away it must have the

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name and address of the sender inscribed on some less conspicuous part of the label and cover. And you must not be surprised if some metropolitan sorting clerk, working on this small inscription instead of the address written large, causes the package to be efficiently and triumphantly redelivered at your door. Don't worry; this has often happened before.

Japanese mails have a scrappy, limp appearance, as both letter and envelope are of the usual thin paper. In accordance with the customary differences between East and West, Oriental letters are folded vertically and pushed endwise into long envelopes, on the front of which the address is written, running from top to bottom. The fact that letters are counted as so many 'round things,' like pencils, bottles, or tea-caddies, and not as so many 'flat things,' like postcards, saucers, or wooden planks, is still another trace of the old days, when messages were rolled or loosely folded from left to right, to be unrolled or unfolded in the reverse direction as the recipient perused them—a complicated manipulation to be observed to this day during the reading of any speech at a public ceremony.

Letter-writing is of necessity a laborious process, even in business correspondence. In a few big up-to-date offices the letters are no longer written by hand, but the Oriental form of typewriting is extraordinarily slow and complicated, as may be imagined. Owing to the enormous number of Chinese characters used, the fundamental feature of a typewriter is a tray holding hundreds and hundreds of these ideographs, besides the various forms of the Japanese written characters, and each separate type stands in its own little slot, face upward. Rows and rows of such letters are arranged primarily according to phonetic grouping, but the

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clerk using the machine often rearranges groups of characters most commonly needed in that particular trade or office. Underneath the first tray there is a second one, holding hundreds more subsidiary characters, which can be fished out as occasion demands.

The letter paper is rolled on to a broad cylinder carried on a frame which can move backward and forward and from side to side over the trays of type, something like a small edition of a mobile overhead crane in a warehouse. Grasping a handle at the front, the operator looks over the rows of type, finds the character wanted, and moves the frame about until its centre is exactly above the slot containing that particular ideograph. When the actuating knob is pressed down a little clip descends from the frame, grips the one type required, lifts it out of its slot, brings it into contact with an inking roller-pad on the way, and finally impresses it on the paper. The releasing of the knob allows the clip to descend again, and return the type to its place. If the clip is not exactly over the slot the type cannot be extracted or returned to its place, and the frame must be shifted about until it is brought into alignment. As the printing of each character requires so many lateral and vertical movements, it is not surprising that even with skilful operating the number of contacts with the paper does not usually run to more than about sixteen a minute. And as in this polysyllabic language a word and its inflections may require a dozen or more such movements, the whole business of typewriting can be described as a trifle slow.

Even these cumbrous machines, the best that can be devised with such great numbers of ideographs in the language, are, as we have seen, to be found only in a few of the biggest offices. In most places of business routine

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correspondence is still done with the same outfit as for private letters, in just the same way as it was done hundreds of years ago, with flimsy notepaper, a writing-brush, and jet-black Chinese ink. For each writing operation the first process is to make the ink. The scribe does this by rubbing the little ink-block on the smooth moistened surface of a hollowed-out slab of stone which looks something like a shallow miniature kitchen sink a few inches long. These preliminaries give him an opportunity to think over the composition of the letter, to string together the formal phrases of which Oriental correspondence, like conversation, so largely consists. Even here the racial incapacity to get started and keep straight on is unconsciously betrayed by the erratic movements which must precede any attempt at writing. It is most noticeable that when chalking up anything on a notice-board, for example, a Japanese first reaches for the eraser, with which he will clean off his first three or four false starts, before mustering up enough courage and perseverance to present the finished announcement to the public gaze. Before beginning to write on paper, too, he will execute various artistic flourishes in the air with his writing-brush, at last bringing it into contact with the paper. Then he will find some cause for dissatisfaction with the tip of the pointed bristles, discard the brush for another, lay this down to mix some more ink, and most likely pick up the brush he first intended to use.

Starting at the right-hand top corner, he proceeds to dab on the innumerable strokes and twirls which go to make up the various ideographs, sometimes running to some dozens of dots and lines for a single word. The script runs in a snaky series vertically downward, then from the top again, and so on, column after column, till the left-hand side of

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the paper is reached. A carefully written document in this old-world style has a peculiar artistic beauty, but as a rule the full characters are very much abbreviated, and they suffer still more from being dashed down in that nervous haste which so strangely alternates with slow hesitancy among these people. An ordinary page of Japanese writing makes the vilest scribble in the Gothic script of Germany look like copperplate by comparison; it resembles nothing so much as a five-year-old's attempt at shorthand. Inevitably it gives trouble even to the native reader, who has been scanning and scribbling that sort of thing all his life. Whereas a European gets the gist of a letter in the few seconds it takes to read it, it is quite common to see a Japanese peering at the paper for several minutes, and, needless to say, calling into consultation anyone who may happen to be at hand.

Not only the actual handwriting, but also the style of expression can be the subject of bewildered contemplation. A business letter may open with some choice remarks about the lovely cherry-blossoms, or the nice cool autumn, or whatever the botanical and meteorological circumstances of the forthcoming transaction may be, and not till the final paragraph will there be anything so mundane as the price of the canned peaches requested, or yours of even date to hand of which we have noted the contents. Sometimes a letter includes the usual complimentary phrases, but omits any mention of the subject about which it is supposed to be written.

In this land of bureautocracy it is natural to see piles of flimsy papers, official correspondence and other documents, but these are merely accumulated rather than arranged in any classified order. Filing systems, the card

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index, and such contrivances were always puzzling to our business students, who simply could not work up any enthusiasm for the queer Western desire to place one's fingers on things at a moment's notice.

One Western invention which has been most wholeheartedly adopted is the telephone, as this gives still further scope to the many people who like to hear the sound of their own voices—an unmistakable national propensity which drives one to the opinion that silence is golden, and cheap at any price. Not that telephoning of itself is an inexpensive hobby in Japan; it costs anything up to eighty pounds or so for the privilege of installation, besides the necessity of waiting a year or more for one's turn on the list of applicants. Rather than go through the lengthy formalities of a transfer, many people may be carrying on with telephones registered in the name of the previous holder but one, who first had the 'phone installed at that particular address twenty years ago. If you want to ring up Messrs Takabayashi and Co. you may have to remember that the name officially attached to the number in question is Mr Koga, the dentist, who retired in 1927.

To say that at the best of times the Japanese voice is the reverse of charming, a hoarse scraping of the vocal chords, is nothing more than the statement of a physiological fact, which applies equally well to certain other forms of speech upon this earth. Even when set to the form of Oriental music it has less than no attraction for uninitiated Western ears. There is something about it at the same time mournful and excruciating. The much-practised warblings of the *geisha* girls sound like nothing so much as the ghostly howlings of the deceased pussies whose skins and other membranes have gone to the making of *samisen*, *koto*, and

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other native instruments of music. Gramophones and radio serve to accentuate rather than to diminish the vocal harshness; it is for such instruments of dissemination, in fact, that performers reserve their mightiest efforts in nasal shrillness.

The use of the telephone calls for a special style of speech, which bristles with meaningless interjections such as "*Ano!*" and "*Ano neigh!*" The usual 'phone conversation could be rendered something like this: "*Ano neigh! You—neigh! We—neigh! Ano! Ano! Ano neigh! This office, neigh! To-day, neigh! Ano! Ano neigh! Your order of yesterday, neigh!*"—and so on, *ad libitum* or *ad nauseam*, which, incredible though it may sound, is ludicrously familiar to anyone who has been in the country five minutes, weeks, or years.

Sound-proof telephone boxes are not much used; 'phones are usually in some open part of the office or other building. Moreover, it has not yet dawned on the Japanese that it is unnecessary to raise the voice when thus speaking at a distance. They can be heard bellowing loudly, as if they meant their voices to carry from Tokyo to Osaka, Yokohama to Hokkaido, without the aid of any wires or instrument between. The business under discussion is broadcast to every one within earshot—which means a pretty wide area—but that matters nothing at all among these people, who, for all their furtive secretiveness, have not the faintest notion of privacy or "Mind your own business!"

Once when we wished to remit a rather large sum by inland money order the clerk yelled across to another department for the eight hundred *yen* these foreigners wanted to send off. Another time, while trans-Siberian communications were in one of their frequent



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spells of uncertainty, we registered a business letter to a firm in London. A few days later one of my ex-students, who worked in a bank not far from that post-office, sweetly informed me that his firm would be glad to handle any remittances I wished to send to England.

In any place of business one is astonished at the casual freedom with which office-boys and underlings are allowed to pop in and out, usually with the pretext of bringing tea, messages, or more charcoal for the *hibachi*. They listen in to important discussions, or even take part, without anyone's seeing anything at all strange in their doing so. The ever-present swarms of such junior employees are also strangely at variance with European ideas of staff margins cut fine and efficiency percentages closely calculated. And when in times of economic stringency the axe must fall, it is the custom to 'behead' the manager or the chiefs of departments, because this saves paying the biggest salaries, and leaves the countless smaller fry still absorbed in employment, however redundant and poorly paid. This drastic act of decapitation may not be so risky as it seems. Single authority and leadership are not so important among these herd-people, and the departure of the head man may only mean one voice less in the frequent and free-for-all consultations.

Among the more picturesque methods of getting rid of whatever profits are made there is the custom of allotting huge sums as an annual bonus to company directors, for no other reason than that they are directors; and also the lavish expenditure on banquets and other celebrations. As an expression of thanks for some help we were once able to give a local chamber of commerce, in an endeavour to open up a new foreign market for their lovely bronze and

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lacquer wares, the members arranged a bright little farewell party, followed by a private jollification among themselves, which must have run away with all the hypothetical income from the intended venture for years to come.

Once again the personal examples we have quoted are merely typical of the experience of foreign residents in general. The leading American newspaper in Tokyo, with a world-wide circulation and reputation, has gone to lengths which perilously border on the altruistic in its efforts to develop foreign trade for Japanese merchants. In connexion with its advertising department it offers advice and information to its native clients, who, in their amazing ignorance of the most ordinary procedure in international transactions, appear to be parlously in need of such aid. Some of the newspaper's staff have given themselves a lot of work by actually undertaking translation work for such firms. The main result seems to have been the collection of a most amazing series of shocking examples of just how business ought not to be conducted, descriptions which would appear beyond the bounds of possibility if they had not appeared in the columns of the well-known newspaper in question.

Under what heading of mercantile theory or practice, for instance, could the following be placed? As a result of an advertisement in the foreign paper's columns one Japanese merchant received a large number of inquiries from all over the world. Some months later *The Japan Advertiser* representatives discovered that all these inquiries had been left to accumulate in the exporter's office, because he did not know what to do with them. This actual incident we can match with a further personal experience. One morning a member of the local chamber of commerce aforementioned

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dashed in on me with an urgent request for a French and a German translation of a cable he wished to send off to Europe before noon. He got them, but several months later he came again, remarking that he had "not yet" dispatched the cables, and asking me to write a couple of letters instead.

While so often displaying such extraordinary ineptitude in foreign trade the Japanese are well known for certain forms of sharp practice, which bring groans of anguish from those who would be their best friends, but which prompt snorts of fury from their Western competitors. It must be admitted, however ruefully, that they frequently show little or no respect for the commonest business principles or conventions. While quick profits have been made in this way, it remains to be seen whether any lasting benefit can result from such inordinate shrewdness, the flagrant infringement of patents, copyrights, and trade-marks, as well as the supplying of goods inferior to sample. One gets used to seeing "Brooks" (or "Browks"! ) saddles which have no connexion with the English firm of that name. The most widely used electric fittings of home manufacture in Japan bear a monogram closely resembling the American G. E. C.

We have noted that the Japanese, as if in protest against their national reputation as imitators lacking in originality, nearly always introduce at least one small variation in whatever they copy—usually in the form of a misfit or a spelling mistake. Teacups for foreign use often slither about because the hollow in the saucer is not made deep enough, and the handle is often too small for Westerners who like to have a sure grip of things. Once we were shown a gramophone, with the assurance that it was made by an English

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firm "with branches in Berlin and New York," but a slightly closer scrutiny revealed the words "tacking machine"—a pretty good clue to its local origin.

The cribbing of literary material, without the slightest acknowledgment to the original author in Europe or in America, is another custom which can be amusing or disconcerting. A Japanese writer will quite readily copy whole chapters even from a well-known work, and unblushingly publish the result in his own name. And so we get gems such as *Merchant of Venice*, by S. Asada, *Innocents Abroad*, by M. Takayama, and, richest of all, a collection of Scriptural extracts appearing as *The Bible*, by Y. Sugimura.

In one second-hand conglomeration of this kind, by a professor we know, his only original contribution was the title, and he made two mistakes in English while composing that. He insisted on having it printed that way, in spite of his English colleagues' advice. It is the old story: you can never tell a Japanese anything; he always knows better about everything. Small wonder then that from time to time one's weary eyes are refreshed by advertisements like this specimen at present before us:

### BEWARE!

*at our Branch, lower down the Post Office.*

### WOMENS MILLINARY

### LOVING CHILDREN'S REDAY-MEAD CLOTHS.

A sort of charcoal warming-pan is described in the following terms:

This Bed stove has great virture and absolutely necessity to Invalid Babies and Ladies who feeling cold, to keep the abdomens in bed and any time in substituting to sit down a fireplace. It gives you gentle warmth to the entire weak bodies.

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The labels on bottles of 'Scotch whisky'—made in Osaka—are a never-failing source of joy to Scotsmen—and others. But surely the first prize goes to the ingenious firm that 'adapted' a British chocolate wrapper to their own use for soap packages, thereby announcing, among other things, that "the contents are unexcelled in flavour and nutritive value."

This commercial smartness frequently overreaches itself. An English chemist friend of ours was approached by a native druggist with a request, not for a consignment of a certain proprietary medicine, or even the empty bottles, but for a supply of the labels. After he had communicated with the manufacturers in question at home the order was executed in such a way that when the labels were pasted on to bottles they changed colour completely, to the indignant disgust of the wily native druggist, who complained that he had been swindled.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Toilers*

#### I. AT WORK

OF all the factors giving a sudden but temporary stimulant to Japanese foreign trade one of the most important is that which has come to be so widely known under the general name of 'cheap labour.' This expression is no idle cry of alarm, no casual piece of propaganda on the part of Japan's competitors. This growing phenomenon of cheap competition in certain lines is not only Japanese; it may appear so for the moment, but it is merely a foretaste of a far more serious menace—from China, India, and other Asiatic countries—against which the Western industrial nations will sooner or later be absolutely compelled to protect themselves, by any means in their power, in order to prevent any hard-won existing standard of living from being completely swamped by the teeming slum populations of the East.

We do not for a moment wish to claim that living and working conditions in Western countries are by any means approaching perfection. All the same, it cannot be denied that at least there is the consciousness of serious imperfections, and an active tendency towards improvement, however slow and disappointing this may often appear. However, even for those who can take a fair and general view of standards of living in England, for example, it is almost impossible to form any picture of things as they actually are in the East. From time to time statistics appear

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in newspapers and other publications. We are told, for instance, that in Japan a woman textile spinner gets 12s. a week, a bricklayer 2s. 3d. a day. Incidentally, the latter is a beautiful example of the complex difficulties encountered when one is trying to make comparisons by means of set formulæ. In England a bricklayer's wages are a sort of gauge by which academic economists like to measure things like prosperity, depression, the swing of the pendulum, or the country's progress on its way to the dogs. But we may well wonder why that proverbial bricklayer is so often quoted as a criterion of labour conditions on the far side of the world. To the super-critical mind of anyone who has lived on the spot it at once occurs that in Japan there is hardly any brickwork at all, owing to the risk of earthquake.

No matter what figures are quoted, however, they can have little meaning unless we look carefully into the conditions underlying them. And before doing so we must, as usual when considering things Oriental, just put aside all our Western ideas and points of view, and be prepared for anything, however strange or impossible it may seem.

At international Labour conferences and other representative gatherings Japanese delegates are famous for making the most touching speeches, pleading special circumstances, putting forward the most plausible reasons why they should not be required to fall into line with conventions to which all the other Powers have agreed. One hears them protesting almost tearfully, for example, against such a general restriction as the close season for fish, and the more one tries to show them the need for the universal application of such a rule, the more they will repeat their claims for

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exemption, owing to the "exceptional hardships which have to be faced by Our Poor Country." And if for any reason or other the representatives of Nippon find it advisable to drop this singular pose it is easy enough for them to sign a convention, or a dozen of them for that matter, with or without reservations, as they know full well that formal ratification depends entirely on the pleasure of a few powerful individuals at home.

Here is a typical specimen of announcements frequently made in official news:

Among the Bills passed at a meeting of the Privy Council there were the following pertaining to labour:

1. Non-ratification of the convention concerning the insurance against illness of the labourers in industrial and commercial employment and the employees in domestic industry.
2. Non-ratification of the convention concerning the insurance against illness of the labourers in agricultural employment.
3. Non-ratification of the convention concerning a system of minimum wages of labourers.

The foregoing, together with a few other matters, were disposed of without debate as soon as they were presented.

And this one is a pretty obvious way of saying 'yes' while meaning 'no.'

In a threefold reservation the Government stipulates that:

1. They are not obliged to agree to any measures which other Governments may take in the terms of their own reservations.
2. Their acceptance shall not prejudice their right to take defensive measures against any steps detrimental to Japanese interests.
3. Their approval of the truce shall not affect their rights to take emergency measures for safeguarding vital national interests.



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Even where international agreements are nominally accepted in order to make a good showing before the world formal statements and figures do not for a moment deceive those who are well acquainted with the actual state of affairs. In this country of polite camouflage, even more than in most other places, foreign observers of economic or sociological matters will find themselves shepherded round; their attention will be carefully drawn to those agreeable features which the powers that be desire to show them. If, however, the visitors show any inclination towards independent observations and conclusions they will find themselves hedged in, obstructed, spied upon or worse.

When people at home are given a plain description of living and working conditions in Japan almost invariably they ask the natural question: "But why do the Japanese work-people put up with such things?" The answer, however perplexing or deplorable, is simple and conclusive: "Because they can't do anything else." In Western countries no one would pretend for one moment that what improvement has been made in the lot of the ordinary working people is a gift from enlightened and beneficent higher powers. Nor, for the matter of that, is it altogether the result of conscious action by the more socially educated workers themselves. However relatively pleasant its results may be, our little bit of progress has been achieved mainly by a bitter struggle against privilege and reaction, against popular ignorance and inertia—a struggle which in the ordinary course of events, aided and abetted by human nature, will continue indefinitely, with varying acrimony and intelligence, success and compromise.

In Japan it is quite impossible, almost inconceivable, for

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working people to make any organized effort to improve their conditions. What few trades unions have ever come into existence, in imitation of the West, have been systematically hampered, crippled, or suppressed by stern official measures. The fact is that the country's social basis is still a sort of patriarchal system. Employers great and small say they know what is best for their work-people; they are in a position to dictate living and working conditions to a degree unheard of in ordinary countries. Employees are in a very weak position, as the crowded population makes their labour so cheap. Those who protest against an official measure or private exploiting soon find themselves adrift. They are often literally beaten into submission, either by the police, who are given almost autocratic powers in maintaining public control, or by the bands of young toughs who are called in to cudgel their fellow-countrymen in the name of patriotic devotion.

It will easily be seen, therefore, that wages and other conditions are what the employers choose to make them. It would be most interesting if anyone could get so far as to investigate the fatherly custom of telling employees that their weekly wages are being 'saved up' for them, as they don't need all that money now, surely, and they'll get it later on. The living-in system is common, and in many cases work-people have to do their shopping in canteens run by the firms employing them, like the truck system in Europe a century ago. There is a wide discrepancy between official statistics and actual practice in the matter of night-work and working hours generally. There are no effective regulations for the safeguarding of workers, even in dangerous trades. Schemes for insurance against sickness have been repeatedly turned down by the Government. It is

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not at all likely that the conditions for women and children in mining and similar occupations will ever be revealed, if, indeed, any record is kept. And we must not forget that similar conditions are in force in the Japanese mercantile marine, which is doing its bit in world-wide cheap competition. Once again it would be hard to get the full story of the coffin-ships, aged vessels bought second-hand from European companies who discarded them years and years before. They are manned by low-paid crews, who go to the bottom when the scrap-iron at last gives way in a storm, and the owners draw the insurance.

It may be difficult, when describing social conditions such as these, to avoid the appearance of ranting on behalf of the underdog. But there we have the merest outline of some of the facts which must be taken into consideration before we can make an estimate of the standard of living, of which we hear so much.

At the same time that the toil of Japan's poverty-stricken millions is being used as a threat to standards of living in other parts of the world they themselves, ironically enough, are being threatened by even cheaper competition from people just without their own borders, though under the control of the same national masters who dictate conditions within Japan itself. The big business concerns have, of course, opened up industrial activities in China, where labour costs are even more microscopic. For a long time they have planned to get a decisive control over China's output of raw materials, particularly the iron of the Yangtse valley and elsewhere. In spite of the way they have done their best to exasperate the Chinese, they still hold large commercial interests, such as the cotton-mills round Shanghai. Incidentally, it is grimly humorous that they

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have been allowed to open factories in places such as Singapore, where they enjoy the advantage of very cheap native labour and the proud privilege of marking their products as being made within the British Empire.

Years ago, in accordance with the most approved principles from text-books on political economy, the Japanese overlords proclaimed Manchuria, as it used to be called, as an outlet for their own surplus population, as well as being the other two usual assets of incorporated territory—a source of raw materials and a market for home-manufactured goods. However well the two latter requirements may have been fulfilled, Manchuria has been of little use to Japanese people in general. Apart from any climatic considerations, the Nipponese could not hope to compete with native labour. The soya-beans and other important crops are tilled by frugal Chinese peasants. At Anshan iron-works, Fushun collieries, and many other industrial centres one meets a small number of Japanese overseers, clerks, and other officials, but they are outnumbered in a ratio of ten to one or more by the Chinese work-people. While enthusiastic patriots in Japan were still rejoicing over their nation's extension of control on Chinese soil some of them were already beginning to realize its disastrous effect on themselves. Kyushu coal-miners and others have been thrown out of what grinding, poorly paid work they had, owing to imports from Manchuria. But so long as the big industrial concerns can get raw materials cheaply they will naturally pay little heed to what feeble protests their fellow-countrymen may raise at home.

The natives of Korea add still further to the troubles of Japanese labour. Years ago this unlucky little peninsular kingdom paid the usual penalty suffered by impotent and

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slow-going states at the hands of restless and imperious neighbours. It is true that the sovereign rule in old Korea was so barbarous that the savage subjugation by the Japanese after 1910 appeared fairly moderate in comparison. Many Koreans have been bought out or otherwise dispossessed of land they held, and drifted with the large numbers who find their way over to Japan, where there is some demand for their cheaper labour, in the very commonest jobs especially. These immigrants from Korea are at the same time despised as poor outsiders and disliked as cheap competitors.

And so, with all their troubles, domestic and external, the toiling millions of Japan could do with a little sympathy. Not that they themselves are conscious of the need. However much they may echo political platitudes about "Our Poor Country," they do not make any fuss about personal poverty they have to endure. In fact, they are accustomed to take it for granted, even to regard it as a virtue. And the depths of abject poverty reached in the great city slums, to say nothing of the plodding peasants on the land, could be described only by those who have lived and worked there. In Western countries we have our slums, terrible enough in contrast with what we think living conditions might or ought to be. It is only in Asia, however, that one can begin to realize the meaning of complete and utter destitution. In China it is widespread—considered pretty well as normal. But there is something more than ordinarily pathetic about the slum part of the population in Japan. It is as though these victims of circumstance have been flung out by the wayside—left behind before the nation has got well accustomed to moving along the hard road of industrialization.

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Even for those comparatively well above the poverty-line, the workers with regular jobs and some standard of comfort, life looks hard enough. Hours are long and work is usually arduous. Early rising seems a national habit, in summer and winter. In fact, for some trades there is more to do in the chilly season, as rates of pay are apt to sink then, and employers take the opportunity, as already pointed out, to start building and other operations. Another national custom is to have the midday meal on the spot, that meagre tinful of cold boiled rice, perhaps with a few pickled vegetables or other tastier bits added. Leaving-off time in the evening is at uncertain hours. Assistants in shops are especially burdened in this respect. Official closing hours are unknown; half-day is equally so. Some of the bigger stores do not open on Sundays, but in most shops, especially those run as a family concern, customers can stroll in at any time; the sliding wooden screens are not drawn perhaps till midnight. There is little or no restriction on juvenile employment; young drudges can be seen carrying heavy burdens or pushing along on the clumsy bicycles at any time of day or night.

Holidays for anybody are few and far between. Sunday is recognized as a day of rest in Government and local offices, and in some places of business, especially in the big towns. Many people get it only once or twice a month. The annual exodus to seaside or country is a phenomenon unknown. A few favoured people get an annual holiday, but for the great majority the same toilsome existence goes on, week in week out, year after year.

The contented or even cheerful bearing of so many of these people is something to wonder at and admire. It seems to increase in direct ratio to the hardness of their

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life. The more one sees of such folk, the more one feels inclined to abandon sophisticated restraint and go through the melodramatic performance of what is known as taking one's hat off to them. When a cotton-clad coolie has stumbled and staggered through snow a foot or two deep to deliver a heavyish piece of furniture, and only with the greatest difficulty is persuaded to accept a tip for his prodigious efforts, one begins to think there are some strange phases of human nature after all.

In this as in other countries there is the usual amount of sordid and desperate crime, though by no means out of proportion to the conditions in which so many people have to live. Perhaps that helps to offset the big social crimes that are committed respectably and well within the law, here as elsewhere. Whatever dirty work may be going on under the surface, however, little is seen of quarrelling, fighting, or other forms of open violence—if, of course, we except the periodical combats in Parliament and the *Soshi* gangs of roughs officially engaged to intimidate political opponents.

The uproar that accompanies the erection of a wooden house framework, or any task of urgency or emergency, would suggest a riot or other civil disturbance, just as the crowd getting on to a train in Russia often sounds like a counter-revolution at the very least. But in the Orient noise means little; every one is yelling advice, instructions, and entreaties at every one else. Japanese workmen especially have the appearance of zestful activity; it is an outlet for the natural restlessness of their race. Not that they are averse to breaking off now and then for a whiff or two from their little pipes or a chat together about nothing in particular.

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## 2. AT PLAY

Japanese people in general have a natural genius for enjoying themselves, as well as for making opportunities for enjoyment, amid the more usual hardness of life. A spare hour or two, some paper decorations, a little sunshine, maybe a bottle of rice-wine, and some eatables just a little tastier than the everyday diet will set them celebrating with an enviable glee and thoroughness. Even if some of these homely ingredients are lacking, that makes little difference to the spontaneous gaiety of the occasion. Cherry-blossom time is at least one feature of Japan that the most romantically inclined visitors cannot exaggerate. Other seasons of merriment are at New Year, the Girls' Festival in March, the Boys' in May, the Dragon Dance, which marks the completion of rice-sowing and other rural operations, and Tanabata in summer.

New Year is an important date in the East. Accounts are made up, debts are settled, and everything is set for a fresh start. Some days before the end of December house-fronts in Japan are provided with a triple decoration: three pieces of stem from the bamboo, the tall grassy plant that bows lithely before the storm, suggesting patience in adversity, sprays of pine-tree, standing for long life, and plum-blossom, for courage, because it appears even when skies are grey and snow is still on the ground. Overhead are hung garlands of rice-straw, attached to which are bits of seaweed, an orange or two, and some wisps of white paper, all with their own symbolical significance.

A seasonable delicacy called *mochi* is made by the pounding of rice with long wooden mallets in deep wooden troughs, where it is also mixed with a little hot water, the



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result being a doughy compound of a fearful leathery texture, much beloved by the native palate, and rendered passable even for foreigners by being toasted over a charcoal brazier. On New Year's morning, for once only in the year, the menfolk get up first, and do a bit of cleaning round the house. During the day there is much ceremonial drinking of rice-wine, eating of *mochi*, and formal visiting of friends. The first few days of January are more or less given up to festivity, as well as bargain-hunting at the local shops, which sometimes keep open their doors most of the night. For some time afterwards there is an extra marked mental stolidity about most people, which somehow seems to be connected with the prolonged festivity of New Year.

The two spring festivals for the children more or less take the place of birthdays at other times of the year. Every family is supposed to possess its collection of tiny dolls and other figures for display on Hina-matsuri, the Girls' Festival, on the third day of the third month, and on Tango-no-Sekku, or Boys' Festival, the fifth day of the fifth month.

Some time before the beginning of March, Mother, Granny, and all the daughters, small and big, get busy with preparations. With great care the little figures are taken out of the cupboard or fire-proof storehouse where household treasures are kept all the year round, to be produced only as occasion requires. Boxes are opened and yellow muslin wrappings removed. In the *tokonoma* or on one side of the best room a wooden stand is set up, its long step-like shelves covered with red cotton cloth. The top shelf is reserved for the figures of the ancient Emperor and Empress. Next come the Imperial musicians, guards,

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and other Court attendants. The other tiers are filled with exquisite models of old-time furnishing, trays, lacquer tables, painted screens, tea-drinking sets and similar utensils. Tiny *tableaux* illustrate well-known tales from Japanese history and legend: Takasago, an aged couple like our Darby and Joan, emblematic of happy family life; Jingoro, the left-handed artist who carved the famous Sleeping Cat at Nikko; the Tongue-cut Sparrow; and so on.

These little figures and models are of the finest workmanship, and are usually very expensive. They are never used as toys in the ordinary sense. To quote from a favourite authority on the subject, "They are admired at a distance for their artistic and historical qualities, as well as the moral lessons they impress upon the youthful mind"—a purpose which would hardly bring a thrill to youngsters in Europe. A little girl's collection is added to year by year wherever the family can afford it. Soon after the festival, which is celebrated by an exchange of visits and mutual admiration of the displays, everything is carefully packed up and put away again till next year. The collections are handed on from generation to generation; some of them must be very old and extremely valuable.

The figures used at the Boys' Festival in May are naturally more reminiscent of the martial side of Japanese history and legend. However antique may be the appearance of the model helmets and suits of armour, it is curious to remember that many great-grandfathers still living can recall wearing such garb in the troublous times when the nation had not yet settled down to the great change in her history, seventy years or so ago. Under the old feudal *régime*, which had gone on for centuries, each local noble,

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great or small, surrounded himself with the greatest possible number of armed retainers, who, in return for a pittance of rice and other necessities of a bare living, were ready at all times to carry out any order or plan of their lord and master, from massacring a rival's subjects at dead of night to merely loafing about their own baron's castle, in penurious idleness, as an inactive discouragement to any neighbouring forces desirous of a return massacre.

Like warriors of every age and clime, these old-time *samurai* have come in for a lot of heroic idealizing. They are used as the exalted patterns of courage, obedience, and Spartan poverty, qualities which can readily be interpreted as implicit subservience to employers, military officers, and the all-powerful State. No opportunity is lost for the inculcation of these ideas into the youth of the nation. The Boys' Festival is made a particularly solemn lesson; on poles and house-tops float great paper carp, the gallant fish who likes to face the current, and who, when vanquished in the struggle with a captor, makes no further fuss about it, but just resigns himself to his fate, as a Japanese warrior ought to do—at least, on the very few occasions when he is not supposed to be invincible against all comers. The toy *tableaux* set up inside the house on the Boys' Day chiefly represent ancient heroes and their doughty deeds. It is curious to notice the modern admixture of sport and military glory—figures of college baseball players, toy guns, tin helmets, and the like.

The Dragon Dance is usually performed by the young men of the village, to celebrate certain stages in the annual round of toil. The story bears a strong resemblance to its Western counterpart: a princess who has been captured by a dragon is rescued by a princely hero. The dragon is

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played by a number of youths, who stand or move about one behind the other in a line, covered by a long painted cloth which stretches over all their heads and shoulders from front to rear, to represent the wicked dragon's body. The leader holds a big ferocious-looking wooden mask of the dragon's head, and with one hand he works the movable lower jaw—together a fearsome apparition. The princess is a boy with a whitened face; he, or she, tries in vain to escape from the threatened attack of the monster. Enter the hero, also in quaint old garb. Meanwhile other players are keeping up plaintive or stirring tunes on drum and flute. The dragon executes a swaying, sweeping dance, matched by the hero, who keeps facing it, and makes sundry threatening passes with his spear. The Oriental version says that part of the rescuer's strategem was to make the dragon drunk, and this is most conscientiously dramatized, an item to which the dancers composing the dragon pay due attention beforehand, with liberal potions of rice-wine always on hand. Gradually the hero settles down to serious business; the movements representing weighty blows come faster and faster, until at last the dragon sinks tragically to the ground, amid the delighted applause of the gathered crowd. One can see these demonstrations going on even in the main streets of a town, with buses and other traffic waiting till the show is over, and nobody sees anything queer in that either.

Of all the picturesque festivals in the Japanese calendar one of the prettiest is certainly that of Tanabata. The story, like many others, comes from China, just as so many English legends originated on the European mainland. What we know astronomically as the Milky Way is really the silver stream of the sky. Two bright stars visible one

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on each side of it have been named Hikoboshi and Tanabata, and this is the story they tell. Tanabata was the daughter of the King who ruled over all the sky, and who lived near the silver stream. As she sat near the door at her work of weaving a handsome young countryman passed by. He stopped to watch her weaving, then spoke to her, and by and by the two young people fell in love. The royal father did not oppose the match, as so often happens in such stories; on the contrary, he approved of it, and allowed the lovers to marry. However, they were so devoted to each other that they began to neglect their work, Tanabata her weaving, and Hikoboshi his farming. In his anger the father ordered them to live on opposite sides of the sky river, allowing them to meet only once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh month.

There are different versions as to how the river is crossed. Some say that the birds of the air all join their wings tip to tip and make a bridge for Tanabata to walk across; others declare that Hikoboshi rows across in a boat. For some time before the day of the festival there are great preparations. Men bring along tall bamboos, freshly cut stems anything up to thirty feet or so high, hollow, and measuring a foot or two round, tapering towards the top, and with feathery masses of long thin leaves hanging over in graceful curves at intervals down the stem. Light as these huge grassy plants are, there is a certain amount of weight in them; their great length requires handling by several men, and they are laid horizontally on wooden trestles along the house-front or the side of the street for the business of decoration. First of all large numbers of paper ribbons, in seven colours, are inscribed with the names of the two lovers, and little poems in their honour, all done in artistic



TANANARIVA



FANABAYA NICHU

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Chinese writing. These paper ribbons are twined into the leaves and slender twigs, along with a number of paper lanterns, either round and plain crimson colour or shaped and painted to represent a boat, a house, or a fish. Round the thick lower end of the bamboo is fitted a square framework of thin wood, with four calico panels on which are painted the scenes from the story: Hikoboshi battling with the waves, Tanabata looking out over the river, or perhaps the birds forming their bridge of wings. About this time children sing "*Tenki ni nari!*"<sup>1</sup> for if it rains too much the water will flow down the rivers of the earth into the sea, and thence into the sky river, making it too wide to be bridged or crossed, and the two lovers will have to wait another year.

The decorated bamboos are set up to stand in front of the houses for some time before the 7th of July, but not till the night of the festival itself are the lanterns lit. It is a pretty sight, here and there all along the streets, to see the tall bamboos with their feathery leaves drooping gracefully down, the little paper ribbons fluttering in the breeze, and the lanterns shining out in the dark like bright crimson fruit on fairyland trees. As the sultry summer weather has already begun, people stroll about in the lightest of *kimono*. The houses themselves look like great square lanterns, the light from inside glimmering softly through the paper screens. Sometimes all these are thrown open to the mild evening air, and we can see a party celebrating the festival, with much drinking of rice-wine and general merriment.

Towards nine or ten o'clock the men merry-makers, who look as pleased and excited as the children, set about the last act of the ceremonial. The tall bamboos are taken down,

<sup>1</sup> "Fine weather!"



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the lanterns carefully extinguished, and perhaps put away for use next year. Then the bamboos are carried to the nearest brook or river and sent floating down, with all their coloured ribbons and written messages to Tanabata and Hikoboshi drifting out to sea, and so to the silver river of the sky.

It may be imagined that with the advance of modernization many of these quaint old customs are dying out. At a meeting back home in England, when I was showing some cinema films I had taken of everyday life in the East, a Japanese girl student said she had never seen Tanabata, the Dragon Dance, and the rest, as her home was in Tokyo.

The art of combining pilgrimages and other religious observances with festivity and sight-seeing is still well practised. Many age-old temples and shrines are to be found in the most lovely and peaceful spots, some within a short distance of a busy town, others far away among the hills and evergreen forests. For visitors from abroad the most famous and admired of such places is at Nikko, the ornate burial-place of powerful rulers who lived and died about three hundred years ago. Enormous care and expense were devoted to the construction and decoration of these sanctuaries. Artists and workmen were brought from far and near, a good deal of the style being Chinese. The rich deep-red lacquer overlay, the curved roofs and intricate ornamentation are skilfully framed among the great trees on the hillside. A majestic approach was provided by the planting of a forty-mile avenue of cryptomeria-trees, but some of these giants are now falling in decay.

Nikko is a popular centre for Japanese visitors also,

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though the national taste does not esteem its elaborate decoration by any means so highly as the austere simplicity of the Shinto shrines at Nara, sacred as one of the first capitals of ancient Japan, and more especially at Ise, cradle of the national religion. Merely looking at the wonderful specimens of Japanese architecture at these places or at the old capital of Kyoto is one of the most impressive experiences one can have anywhere in the world. These towering gateways, massive columns, vast roofs, and spacious floors are all of wood, ranging from huge timbers made out of whole tree-trunks down to the most delicate carving. To Western eyes wooden construction may look impermanent, but its perishable nature of itself leads to the survival of the buildings thus made. Whereas in Europe we see so many castles, abbeys, and such edifices once erected in solid stone, but now allowed to moulder away in tragic if picturesque ruin, the Nipponese method is to clear away the wooden structures as they threaten to decay, and, at least in the case of great temples and similar national landmarks, to rebuild them looking just as they were before. Electric wiring and such modern contrivances are carefully concealed.

The precincts of a temple or shrine are favourable spots for observing the quaint blending of old and new. A priest in his traditional robes is wearing rimless spectacles from Germany. A pilgrim in straw sandals and medieval costume finds a vacuum flask a desirable addition to his peripatetic outfit. A young city clerk, in neat Western-style suit, walks quietly up to the front of the shrine, shakes the thick rope that strikes a gong overhead, claps his hands in the customary way, bows his head and says a prayer, drops a copper coin into the huge collecting-box, and walks

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away as he came. This is the ordinary way of prayer and worship; except on special occasions people do not gather inside the building.

There are supposed to be two distinct religions in Japan, the old Shintoism, often referred to as not a religion but rather a cult of ancestral and racial worship, and Buddhism, which came through China centuries ago. With the passage of time it has become difficult to distinguish the two in many cases, both in the architectural style of their buildings and also in the religious ideas which exist among the people, although Shintoism and Buddhism officially remain quite separate. In these days of national fervour the old national cult of Shintoism naturally swells in importance, and the Buddhists are at some pains to share in public attention. For those Japanese who come into contact with Christian missionary work, or with Western philosophies, the mental and religious compound becomes even more varied.

And so the people jog along, toiling and getting what bit of enjoyment or happiness they can out of life, like fellow human beings the world over. Though at times they bristle with national fervour, especially when in contact with outside people and affairs, or when prompted by national leaders within, their main preoccupation is daily life, with not overmuch thought for the distant and problematical future. Not that it would make much difference if they did so concern themselves. As we have seen, they have extraordinarily little voice in the conduct of things; matters are in the hands of the powers that be, from the big politicians whose wholesale graft and corruption is from time to time unmasked by jealous rivals down

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to the local dignitaries who buy and sell privileges on a smaller scale, but just as systematically.

### 3. WOMENFOLK

We have seen that in the written language of China and Japan, based on the old picture-writing, the word for 'woman' is a stooping figure. This is variously interpreted as a woman bowing in a respectful attitude or bending low under a heavy burden. Either version is a strikingly appropriate description of her position in Oriental countries even to this day. It is not at all facetious to say that women have no standing at all; they spend a great deal of time on their knees, serving and otherwise bowing down to their lords and masters in the good old style. From girlhood they are taught to honour and obey their parents and their brothers. After marriage, which is practically universal, and takes place before the age of twenty-five, a wife must obey not only her husband but also his family, especially his mother. If, as is often the case, the young married couple remain to share the man's old home the wife automatically becomes a sort of additional domestic in the household. The line between servant and relative is often very hard to determine.

We must not imagine that sharing a house in Japan is anything like the arrangement known by that name in the West, with each family or branch of it keeping more or less to itself in its own rooms. To begin with, separate rooms, as we have seen, are not so clearly defined; sliding back the screens throws them all into one, and this is rather typical of family life, which goes on very much in common. In the same way, the line of demarcation

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between relatives and employees is not always very clear. In spite of the growing amalgamation of huge business concerns, the great majority of trading and manufacturing firms in Japan are very small affairs, each employing only a few work-people. In some cases at least the younger employees are regarded more or less as part of the family, with a consequent saving on wages, while the many growing sons and daughters are expected to help with the work too.

It is all part of the system still surviving from the old days, the family rather than the individual being the social unit. When the population was almost entirely rural the numerous relations in each family lived and worked together on the land. If for any reason a member of the family went away he could always claim shelter if obliged to seek it beneath the paternal roof, and a bowl of rice at least could be found for him as he resumed his labours with the rest. With the growth of the factory system and urban life the old family ties have been loosened to some extent. Those whom a slump has driven back from the towns have not found too warm a welcome in the old homestead, especially as the peasant folk themselves have been the worst hit by periods of economic depression.

In all classes of society, however, the father or senior male of the family still exercises considerable authority over the other members. To us it may seem strange that a young man must get his father's or perhaps his elder brother's consent before he can get married or embark on some business venture.

The position of women, according to Oriental fashion, is decidedly subordinate; they are the drudges of the family and of society. When building, levelling, or other

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constructional operations are going on gangs of women are seen carrying boxes or baskets of soil, stones, and other material on their backs, for a few cents a day. Peasant women trudge along the roads, pulling sturdily in the harness of a wooden two-wheeled cart. In town or country women shuffle along under huge bundles of firewood, bales of rice, and other loads. Sometimes one meets an aged crone, her back bent horizontal and never to straighten again, hobbling along on a stick, yet another reminder of the Japanese picture-word for 'woman.'

In the same connexion comes another Sino-Japanese ideograph, for 'child,' showing an infant's head, arms, and legs kept together by the long shawl which ties it to its mother's back. If ever a census were made of familiar sights in Japan the first on the list would most likely be a woman carrying a baby on her back. Often a slightly older child is being led by the hand, and the mother is further burdened by sundry heavy bundles and packages, which she carries as best she may. And it is not only the poorest families that have a teeming birth-rate; six, eight, or ten children are quite the thing among well-to-do people.

For women in general there is very little social contact. When my wife was asked by some friends to initiate them into the mysteries of European cookery the periodical gatherings at our foreign house became a social occasion as well as a practical demonstration. My wife found it necessary to leave the ladies to themselves for half an hour, to work off all the gossip before the cookery part of the business could begin. And as there is practically no social intercourse between men and women, young or old, one cannot imagine their becoming acquainted with each

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other and then getting married in our free-and-easy Western way.

Marriage, like most other things in the East, is a matter of indirect negotiation and protracted consultation. It is not an agreement between individuals, but a formal arrangement between the families, with a friend or a professional 'go-between' acting as intermediary. The girl in the case has no chance to say anything in the matter, and it may be that her future husband is in the same position. The two young people may know little or nothing about each other; quite probably they have never even met before.

The wedding, also like most other things in the East, is a long-drawn-out process, beside which our Western ceremony would look like a casual party. Some time beforehand there is an elaborate exchange of presents, greetings, and congratulations between the representatives of the two families, with innumerable other formalities, strictly carried out according to established custom. The main part of the wedding itself is the symbolical drinking of wine before witnesses, after which the speech-making and general festivity may go on all night. It is one of the few occasions on which a Japanese woman ever wears a head-covering, and then, according to Oriental significance, it is for the purpose of hiding her horns and the devil which is supposed to be innate within her.

The code of behaviour to which a Japanese wife must conform would drive a Western young lady to open rebellion. It is, for example, an important point of wifely duty that she must sit up for her husband, to no matter what hour, in order to welcome him back from whatever nocturnal rambles he may have considered fit to embark upon. She must help him to divest himself of his clothes,

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which she then puts away tidily for him. And if his lordship chooses to bring back a girl friend with him, then his wife is expected to make the visitor welcome too.

One of the finest Japanese couples we know, a native Christian pastor and his wife, are so far advanced in Western ways that the husband addresses his spouse by the ordinary polite pronoun 'you,' instead of 'the thing in front of me,' which is the customary form of address when speaking to wives, menials, and other inferiors. But Mrs Takayama can never bring herself to violate etiquette far enough to have meals with her husband in company, when she always devotes herself to the task of preparing, and waiting on him and the guests.

In Japan the marriage bond is very loosely tied, at least as far as the man is concerned. If after a 'trial marriage' he is not suited he can easily get rid of the girl. When the marriage ceremony has been performed the husband can get it annulled on many slight pretexts. Disrespect to the man's parents has been quoted as a ground for divorce. A man may lead as gay a life as he wishes, and his wife must smile and bear it. In the very rare cases of feminine infidelity, however, there is a tremendous hullabaloo, and the unlucky offender is thrown out in disgrace. Not so long ago great public excitement was stirred up because a lady refused to go on with a marriage to a man whose past life had left him with an infectious and incurable disease.

Visitors whose observations in Japan are apt to be superficial rather than balanced often take one glance at the *yoshiwara*, as the licensed brothels are called, and then go off with a fixed estimate of Japanese 'morals' as something well below zero. Such questions are complicated; in different countries they get different answers, if any.



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We ourselves included the *yoshiwara* in our general investigations, as my wife is equally keen on seeing things as they are, rather than merely accepting other people's opinions. And if you wish to add the last touch of the bizarre to the picture of a staid Englishman and his wife strolling round an Oriental brothel quarter, just imagine some of the proprietors, bowing and smiling at their doors, inviting the pair of us to pop in and spend an hour or two upstairs. For the Japanese this is nothing unusual; they can take along a lady friend and have the use of a room on special terms.

One of the most curious things about such a licensed quarter is that there is nothing to shock the eye of the most susceptible prude, as there might be in other places I could name, but need not. There are broad road approaches, ample for the convenience of patrons who arrive in cars. The houses are of the usual Japanese type, looking very neat in their simple construction of plain wood. There is usually no surrounding garden, and the front door and lattice screens look immediately on to the broad roadway. Just inside the entrance there is always a stout wooden screen built into the floor. Turning to left or right of this, one sees the photographs of the girls employed by each particular establishment. Then, through a large glass window, the girls themselves can be seen, sitting on the usual floor cushions in their waiting-room, smoking and chatting together or otherwise passing away the idle time. When they see a prospective customer come in they sit up and take notice, sending engaging smiles and bows in his direction. Whatever may be said of the system behind it all, there is not the slightest doubt that the external impression given is charming and artistic. The girls themselves no longer make up their faces and necks with the ghastly

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old-fashioned rice-powder. They know how to make themselves most radiantly attractive, and the wonderful beauty of their silken *kimono* completes a picture which can only be described as exquisite.

But the sordid contrast is to be found "the other side of the canal"—an expression which has become a local proverb. Within a few yards are the unofficial quarters, where the same trade goes on without the slightest attempt at beautifying it. Hither gravitate the girls for whom the more expensive brothels have no further use, or those who have never been able to get better custom. Rows and rows of miserable wooden huts line the narrow pathways; seedy-looking young men of the town go from one entrance to another, shoving back the little wooden shutter like that behind the ticket-window at a railway-station, having a look at the girl who sits inside, and trying to make a bargain with her.

Girls for the licensed quarters are obtained in various ways. The country districts are a favourite source of supply. Travelling agents keep a look-out for likely material. Peasant fathers, loaded down with debt, are persuaded to agree to the employment of their young daughters in this way, in return for a payment which varies with their prospective value, but which appears as a small fortune to the poor peasant. So far from any parental duty to give their children a start in life, it is the Oriental custom for children to be sacrificed for the sake of their parents. A favourite story theme extols the devoted daughter who saves the family fortunes by becoming a *joro* or a *geisha*. From time to time there arises a controversy as to whether there is any real difference between these two, the fully-fledged prostitute and the girl trained to entertain the male

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guests at a hotel or elsewhere. The *geisha* is another peculiar feature of the Japanese social system. It is not the custom for people to invite each other very much to their own houses. Nor do men look upon their own wives as companions, to share any of their pursuits or amusements. The Japanese gentleman's idea of a good time is to for-gather with a party of male friends at a local hotel or restaurant for a bit of dinner and a lot of rice-wine. This refreshment is served by the prettily dressed *geisha*, whose duties also include sprightly conversation that the men do not get or expect at home, the performance of picturesque dances, and other ways of making the evening bright and cheerful.

The two professions are supposed to be quite distinct, but in some ways they are similar. In either case the girl or her parents may be paid an agreed sum for a contract to last a certain number of years. But she is promptly debited with heavy expenses for her fine *kimono* and other equipment. Such debts are made to pile up more and more, and the girl is required to lengthen her engagement in an attempt to work off these liabilities. As time goes on she may find the date of her release getting farther off instead of nearer.

Although this system of selling children into such occupations is taken for granted among the Japanese it inevitably arouses the ire of many ardent reformers among the foreign missionaries. Thrilling tales are told of girls snatched from the hands of the procuring agents, or from the licensed quarters themselves, and smuggled away where recapture is unlikely. The missionaries make every effort to arouse public opinion against the trade, and the proprietors naturally retaliate by any means in their power,



GIRLS CARRYING A BABY AND OTHER LOADS



NURSE-GIRLS



ENTRANCE TO A SHINTO SHRINE



MIYAJIMA, A FAMOUS SCENIC SPOT

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which is considerable. It remains to be seen, however, whether anything can be achieved by foreign exhortation or assistance. If any change is to be made it will have to come from within the country, and such a prospect still seems very distant.

In the general status of Japanese women a change, if any, can be only very slight and slow. The parliamentary franchise, for what it is worth, is reserved for men. Political ignorance and apathy are even greater among women. Except for those working girls who get mixed up in the excitement and sufferings attendant upon proletarian movements, very few show any interest at all in national or social matters. At the same time, however, one of the most hopeful and admirable signs in national life is the activity of those who are feminist reformers in the very best sense of the term: not only well-to-do ladies who are striving for the abolition of certain social evils, but more especially the thousands of housewives up and down the country who are showing an increasing and intelligent interest in practical matters, such as suitable diets and preparation of food, the clothing and general care of children. In these and other directions they show a skill, patience, and perseverance which form a remarkable contrast to the vague muddle achieved by so many of the lordly menfolk in their super-modern undertakings.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Young Nippon*

#### I. INFANTS AND IDEOGRAPHS

THE name "Children's Paradise," so often used by those who have seen little or nothing of Japan, is surely one of the most ironical titles ever bestowed on this little-known land. Those who have been thrilled by seeing so many brightly clad youngsters running about would be appalled by a closer look at the nation's child-life. In the first place, the rabbit-like birth-rate would make over-population an even more serious problem were it not for the extraordinary mortality, not only among adults and growing children generally, but more especially among the tiny babies and their mothers, who are carried off in untold numbers owing to the primitive conditions that prevail.

In spite of this human wastage, the infant population seems copious and inexhaustible. We have already noted the familiar sight of mothers carrying on their backs babies suspended by long strips of material passing round the bodies of parent and child, or else enveloped in a huge cloak which includes them both, according to season. Incidentally, the picture reminds us of one very charming touch in the written languages of China and Japan: the two characters for mother and for child, when placed together, mean 'fondness.' There can be little doubt about this sentiment among Eastern parents, though practical expression of it, in the care of health and general upbringing, is not so evident.

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The conditions under which the smallest infants hang on to life truly illustrate the survival of the toughest. It is not at all surprising that Japan is the land of poor eyesight, bronchial troubles, and jumpy nerves. As the mother trudges along, the baby on her back may be seen fast asleep, with head rolling and jolting to and fro like a big rubber ball. The face and eyes are often exposed to the glaring sun, and in summer weather numerous flies are in attendance.

The chronically running noses and the skin diseases of tiny toddlers are a grievous trial to those foreign visitors who are determined to look only on the bright side of things. It is no doubt from the swarms of animated little Jappy dolls running about that the Paradise myth is derived. Another pretty story is that Japanese children are invariably good-tempered, that they seldom cry, and are never punished, because they are so perfectly behaved. Oriental parents who would be horrified at the idea of administering a salutary spanking have other and more devious ways of retribution. In the main, however, the children are most thoroughly spoiled, especially the boys. One often sees a wretched little tyrant howling and stamping in fury until he gets his way, instead of the wholesome discipline he needs. When a baby cries it is at once picked up and jogged about. Great louts of three or four still have a rubber dummy stuck in their mouths, for without it they would screech the place down. Children of all ages play in the streets at all hours, long after a reasonable and healthy bedtime.

As national funds do not permit of education's beginning before the age of seven or so, the infants spend quite a number of years playing about the streets, where a special



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but the age of retirement is variable, sometimes at the choice of the teacher. Especially in the higher posts one hears of men who keep on till more than a ripe old age. From primary school to university it is quite the thing for a head to retire as soon as eligible for a pension, at a comparatively early age, then go and get a second post in another part of the country.

Teachers in general seem to be a hard-working and conscientious body of men and women. As Western discipline is not practised, they give one the impression of amiably shepherding along a lot of thoughtless little animals. A good deal of time is spent in outdoor sketching, visits to scenic spots and national memorials, and other excursions.

During the seven or eight years of elementary school life the children's main occupation must be the memorizing of the Chinese characters which still form the base of the written language of Japan, the learning of which is itself an arduous task, even for the native inhabitants. As previously indicated, the Japanese have no original script of their own; hundreds of years ago they borrowed the ideographs of their neighbours the Chinese, and have never paid them back. It is true that at one bygone period a Japanese scholar invented a system of simplified characters, looking rather like an Oriental version of shorthand. Instead of replacing the cumbrous old Chinese ideographs, however, these shorter signs have been tagged on to them, as terminations and other embellishments, making the task of reading and writing still more complicated. Whereas an original old Chinese word would be written in one or two ideographs, the Japanese form of expressing the same idea often necessitates the addition of half a dozen more signs and syllables by way of inflexion. And the Japanese

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themselves can never agree as to the phonetic application of these *kana* signs to the words expressed by the *kanji*, or Chinese ideographs. One of our favourite conundrums was to ask some one to write a well-known name such as 'Tokyo' or 'Kyushu' in the simplified *kana* script. In no time half a dozen of them would be arguing as to the proper transcription of the sounds and syllables. The name 'Tokyo' would appear to the uninitiated as having two or perhaps three syllables. There are people who can make it five or six.

This simplified *kana* writing must be used in any Japanese telegram, another thing that is not so easy as it looks. The *kana* signs are written in the usual way, starting from the right-hand top corner, vertically down the first column, one by one in the little squares printed on the telegraph form, then down the next column on the left, and so on. The catch is that no spaces are left; there is not the slightest means of determining where one word leaves off and another begins. It is just as if you sent off a wire with all the words run into one, if you can imagine such a thing, and then expected the recipient to decipher it. It is even worse, for, whereas in a European language it would be fairly easy to divide the whole mass off into the words intended, in Japanese the *kana* signs can have different meanings according to the way they are grouped. It goes without saying that such a telegram cannot be read right off. The addressee, or some one else, as there is no privacy in such matters, runs over and over the string of signs, putting them together this way and that to make possible words, saying them out loud to help him in the attempt, and calling in further aid from relatives and friends, colleagues and assistants. They all have a go at it, and

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was explained that the passages had no particular meaning, but they had been inserted as beautiful specimens of literary style. Unattached ideographs are commonly interpolated, apparently with no other purpose than to ornament the text.

At first we were surprised when a Japanese professor told us that if confronted with a map of his own country, or a railway guide, he would find a large number of place-names quite unintelligible. Later on, when map-reading and asking the way on our jaunts around the country, we got used to that sort of thing. One village through which we often passed was known as Isurugi—"the Hamlet of the Moving Stone." The same name with the addition of the word for 'mountain' would be naturally taken for Isurugi-yama, but where it actually appeared on the map as the name of a mountain near by it was pronounced *Seki-do-san*. Small wonder, then, that even educated Japanese with a nominal stock of several thousand memorized ideographs are often puzzled by words in their own language. Two or three thousand ideographs are supposed to be sufficient for ordinary purposes. Bespectacled faces are seen thrust close to newspaper and magazine wherever one goes. At the same time there are many people who have forgotten many of the ideographs they ever learned, and the number of people who can neither read nor write must be far in advance of official statistics, which are apt to exclude from illiteracy all those who have attended school at all.

The statement that the Japanese language has no grammar is largely true, for its usage and syntax are frequently governed by considerations of social status rather than by any known linguistic laws. From time immemorial it has been necessary first to determine the exact social grade of the person to whom one is speaking, or writing, and then

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to frame one's words and style accordingly. In most countries, it is true, one does not cajole one's boss with the same diction as that used in warning off a tramp. In the Orient, however, the shades of difference must be much more meticulously observed.

In debates among hardened connoisseurs as to the relative merits of various languages in the matter of profanity mere European tongues are generally relegated to a sort of kindergarten or Sunday-school grade. Even Arabic is considered to be far behind Chinese, which for sheer picturesqueness and inexhaustible vocabulary is in a class by itself. On the other hand, however, the Japanese language possesses few or no cuss-words. The worst I ever heard, even in the excitement inseparable from a Nipponese sports-field, was when a football full-back got an awful crack on the shin from an opposing forward. "*Baka!*"<sup>1</sup> he exclaimed, and at the next pause in the game he apologized for his lurid vituperation.

A most withering effect can be obtained, however, by the careful adjustment or omission of the various honorifics and polite phrases, which are much more complex than any grammatical abstrusities in a Western tongue. Instead of a simple conjugation like "I go, thou goest, he goes," for instance, they have something more or less equivalent to "This miserable worm crawls; Your August Worship Most Honourably Deigns to Proceed; he goes, struts, or skedaddles," according to the relative importance of the person mentioned.

Clear through all this tangle there stands out one unfailing rule: "Whatever a Japanese says, or does, is right. Whatever a foreigner says, or does, is wrong."

<sup>1</sup> "You fool!"

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Westerner, but among these people of relatively low income the cost of sending a boy on for higher education, plus the loss of any potential wages he might be bringing in towards the upkeep of the customarily large family, often represents a brave sacrifice on the part of parents and other relations. And, as is the case the world over, these great sacrifices may meet with a varying reward. The whole family of a humble workman may some day bask in the reflected glory of an elder son who has become a clerk in one of the numberless Government and local offices. A widow with an only son sees him at last in a comfortable position, able to re-establish the family and its fortunes. There are, of course, a few disappointing cases where a young fellow does not make full use of the opportunities given him at such a cost. So strong remains the family tie, however, in spite of changing conditions, that such cases are very exceptional.

As might be expected in this country of strict central control, the various branches of education are closely organized. What goes by the name of education in most parts of the world is a rather formal business, but in Japan especially it is strongly reminiscent of the story told about Napoleon's Minister of Public Instruction, who, in order to illustrate the perfect organization of the department under his control, one day pulled out his watch and remarked that at that moment every class of a certain grade in every school of a certain type would be doing a certain chapter of Cæsar. Text-books in Japanese schools are largely confined to those published by the Ministry of Education itself, and none may be used unless it has been closely scrutinized by Government officials, and bears the full and formal permit printed within the covers.

*Besides the general secondary schools, there are others*

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in special branches, commercial, technical, and agricultural. Studies in all departments are extremely theoretical, anything practical being mostly considered beneath the dignity of these important young men and their very academic preceptors. Small wonder, then, that in so many cases the industrial technique of the nation is a fearful and wonderful thing. Nor is there the wholesome clash in grown-up life between the hardened old practical expert and the self-confident youngster fresh from college, whereby the youthful theorist gradually if painfully learns that books are a useful background, but must take their proper place in the scheme of real things. In Japan those in charge have grown up in a theoretical, stool-sitting tradition, which continues with very little change. And difficult though it often is for a young man with the usual diplomas to obtain a post of any sort, we have known some graduates who have been fairly grabbed by offices where the members of the existing staff were recruited long ago direct from ordinary schools, and where the new and bright young college men have been pushed on to managerships and other lofty positions with an amazing speed, which would do credit to the most ambitious advertisements of Memory-training, Personality, and other Correspondence Courses in Western countries.

Psychologically speaking, these theoretical studies in the Japanese scheme of education are, after all, naturally fitted to the normal Oriental mentality, which is essentially receptive rather than co-ordinative. Cramming is also a common feature of academic studies the world over, but for sheer memorizing the Oriental has no equal. One need not be surprised at the case quoted by an English professor of mathematics in India. Discovering two examination papers

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with one of the problems worked out in exactly the same curious way in both, with an obvious error right in the middle, but with a sudden resumption of the proper course, leading to the correct solution, he hauled up the two Indian candidates on a charge of cribbing. Not only did they show that they had been sitting in different parts of the examination room, but they triumphantly produced the text-book from which they had carefully memorized the problem in question—including a printer's error, which they had learned off with the rest, quite unaware of the difference this accidental twist ought to have made to the apparent course of reasoning.

While Orientals have such an enormous capacity for memorizing things, medical and psychological evidence goes to show that they are distinctly weak in the comparison and co-ordination of facts, and in their application.

Education above the primary stage is largely confined to the boys. Those few Japanese girls who go on one step are given a modified secondary course, but comparatively few get so far as a university. Owing to the complicated difficulty of the native tongue once again, a boy's educational career is exceptionally long-drawn-out. We have seen that he does not complete his secondary school course till he is nearly twenty, and after that, before he can enter a university, if he wants to, there is another intermediate three-year course, at colleges classified into several branches, just as the secondary schools are, the ordinary, the commercial, technical, agricultural, and others, with correspondingly higher and more intensely theoretical studies in these different branches. It can be understood, therefore, that for a university man to graduate at between twenty-five and thirty is quite usual.

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## 2. STUDENT LIFE

Schoolboys and students are an even more prominent feature in Japan than in most other countries. In England one sees the familiar variety of school caps and college blazers; in Germany the coloured cap-bands and breast-ribbons of the different classes or students' circles. In Japan, wherever one goes, there are large numbers of youngsters, from the age of about seven to twenty odd, all dressed more or less alike, in a uniform with close-fitting tunic and long, shapeless trousers, and a stiff-peaked cap with the brass badge of the wearer's school. These badges also conform to a few general patterns. The five cherry-petals form a common basis for many primary schools; the character *chu*, meaning 'middle,' appears in those for ordinary secondary schools; the wings and staff of Mercury in those for commercial students; while undergraduates incorporate at least some of the ideographs *teikoku dai gakko*, for "Imperial University." These patterns are also reproduced on the brass buttons down the front of the tunic.

The usual colour for these uniforms and caps is dark blue, or sometimes black. In summer an even thinner cotton cloth of light grey is used, giving an undeniably mottled, public-institution effect. In the big towns, especially at times of extra special national fervour or excitement, school authorities favour uniforms of khaki drill, which still further increases the resemblance to the Army. As we have already seen, the close-fitting uniforms of cotton material would hardly seem to be the best thing for young and growing bodies. They tend to cramp the chest, they offer little protection in cold weather, and they



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are uncomfortable in the hot summer. Whenever possible the young fellows prefer to undo the stiff upstanding collar and the front buttons, and it is curious to see them clutch at their tunic throat to pull the edges together when spoken to, especially by anyone in authority.

Among the smaller boys, and even in secondary schools, uniforms are apt to become badly worn and dilapidated—a condition, as previously observed, due to family circumstances, and often giving the wearer a pinched and scraggy appearance, arms and legs projecting far beyond where sleeves and trouser-ends leave off. On the other hand, however, the uniform can look very smart, particularly in the case of college students who are able and willing to take care of it. It is universally regarded as a mark of distinction; a student is a person of some importance, because he is directly connected with a State educational institution.

The youths themselves are fully conscious of the dignity of their standing, though most of them are only reasonably so. It is only in some of the older-established colleges that one meets the super-exponents of self-conceit, going about with shaggy, unkempt hair, filthy and ragged uniforms, as the hall-mark of their own academic attainment and the old national spirit of which they talk so much. Colossal vanity is not necessarily regarded as a disagreeable trait; one meets youngsters with all the airs of an eccentric genius, a pose that would be treated with ridicule in any other surroundings. Japanese students in general, however, are a jolly, likeable lot, for all their funny little ways. Like most people in the country, they are to be admired for the way they make the best of life, usually under very hard conditions.



A GOODBYE DOLL PRESENTATION AT AN AMERICAN KINDERGARTEN

SEP. 27



PRIMARY SCHOOL BOYS



YOUNG NIPPON, IN VARIOUS GARB

## *Young Nippon*

In the earlier stages of their educational career boys, of course, live at home, though even when they start at a secondary school many of them have to undertake daily journeys by rail or road to the next town. Those who manage to get to the higher colleges will most likely have to live away from home, as these places are naturally to be found in the bigger towns. The highest ambition is to enter the Imperial University in Tokyo, but this great centre of learning can afford to choose only the best students, and the rest must be satisfied with accommodation at other Imperial universities, in Kyoto, Kyushu, Sendai, Hokkaido, and elsewhere.

Unless actually living with their parents, first-year men are usually required to live in a hostel in or near the college grounds. This is generally a large shack-like building of wood, divided off into sections, with a large number of small rooms holding two students each. The room itself is fitted with nothing more than the floor mats and a huge cupboard or two built into one side. The young men provide their own bedding, which is simple enough, consisting of the indispensable thick quilts, to be spread on the floor at night and stowed away in the cavernous cupboards by day. The rest of the furnishing is also extremely simple: a low table for reading and writing, a floor cushion or two, a small set of bookshelves, and a few other odds and ends. A more personal and homely touch is added by the fastening up of pictures on the screens and wooden partitions, as well as sports pennants and other gear in imitation of American student customs. When students are living in rooms somewhere in the town the general arrangements are pretty much the same. They have the national fondness for staying at home when possible, but when they do move about, within



PRIMARY SCHOOL BOYS



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or group must be made up to a certain figure. A college would never risk 'losing face' by letting its general percentage sink below that of a rival and junior institution. Many curious incidents result from the reactions of foreign teachers to this system of adjustability. One French professor was asked how he reckoned his class marks through the year. Being well versed in things Oriental, he replied that he worked on a minimum mark of 40 per cent., for presence—or absence. One Englishman could not bring his conscience to pass a couple of men who were quite hopeless in his subject, though they were shining lights in the college baseball team. There was the usual supplementary examination to give them a chance to get through, but with the same result, less than 10 per cent., and even that was more than they were worth. Came an additional supplementary examination, when the college registrar begged Mr Fazackerley to pass the two men through, as they were such assets on the sporting side. Knowing that if he failed them again the result would be adjusted, anyway, he did not bother to look at the answer papers, but just wrote 105 per cent. on each, and heard no more about it. The students passed, the official face was saved, and every one was happy.

From time to time some one who has failed to bribe his way through raises an outcry against the system of graft behind examination successes and promotions, and for a time the newspapers give the latest instances in the brisk exchange of payments and privileges. If necessary a scapegoat is found, or the noisy protesters are given enough to quieten them again. This, after all, is only a small replica of what goes on in public life. There is a periodical revelation of surreptitious practices, even among Government

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ministers, who are exposed by those dissatisfied with their share in the deal.

It might be imagined that with such a dubious system of qualifying examinations in front of them students would become apathetic or demoralized. On the contrary, they pretty well resemble other students the world over. There are the usual types: the bookish, studious ones, really working too hard in order to gain as high a place as possible; on the other hand there are those who just scrape along with the minimum of effort. And their professors, like their academic colleagues of every age and clime, bitterly complain that students nowadays are not what they used to be. They sigh that the modern young man is interested far less in his books than in the *café*, cinema, and other outside attractions.

In view of so many shocking examples among men well known in public life, and the meagre prospects facing young fellows going out into the world, it would not be surprising if students generally did become thoroughly discontented. Apart from occasional fluctuations, the rate of unemployment is very high. It seems extraordinary that after being spoiled as children and pampered as young lordlings college graduates find themselves completely the victims of economic and social circumstances. In chatting with students nearing the end of the course we gave up asking any questions or making any mention of their plans for the future, as we found that so many of them had nothing at all in view. In official returns there were always large numbers in the column "Working at home," which, we found, was made to include those who had not yet found any work, even several years after graduation.

White-collar jobs are the only ones acceptable to young



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men who have spent such long years in advanced studies, and as such posts are never numerous enough to absorb more than a small part of those seeking them, many graduates are driven eventually to accept any work that promises a bare living. This feature is not by any means peculiar to Japan, though perhaps the restless student with poor prospects is most typical of the East. Much of the political trouble occurring from time to time in India and Egypt is caused by men of the student class who have no work and wages to keep them out of mischief. And although Japan has not to concern herself with any outside control in such affairs, the question of the 'black-coated' worker is one of her problems in Westernization.

Having suggested that one might expect the poor economic prospects to be a cause of restlessness among Japanese students, we are not at all surprised to find that the familiar sequence of cause and effect cannot by any means be taken for granted. In an Oriental country things may work out like that, or they may not, and the only sure rule is that nothing can safely be expected except the unexpected. Unrest is undoubtedly common among the youth of Japan, though for reasons which would look peculiar anywhere else. And while academic gentlemen there are so fond of repeating that it is impossible for outsiders to appreciate the lofty national psychology, one is naturally inclined to ask why they themselves have such everlasting trouble with their own pupils and students.

An English professor in Egypt once said that the life of students there consists of three phases: going on strike, planning the next strike, and being given a holiday to prevent a strike. In Japan school strikes are also perennial occurrences, hard to be understood by those who have

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never seen them. The youngsters are never at a loss for a lofty motive: a protest against low marks, high fees, the dismissal of a popular teacher, the retaining of an unpopular one, a shortage of tickets for a big sports festival, an objection to some remark taken to be derogatory to youthful dignity; these have all been the declared causes of frequent disagreements between students and authorities. There is a traditional procedure in these uprisings. The students hold protest meetings, draw up a plan of campaign, sometimes occupy a club-room or hostel as headquarters, organize processions and demonstrations, and make long, impassioned speeches about the righteousness of their sacred cause and their determination to defend it till death if need be. Sometimes they take more active steps, way-laying obnoxious individuals on the way home, or even assaulting their preceptors in their own staff-room.

Meanwhile the authorities are busy with their side of the procedure, making announcements as to the ineligibility of the rebels' preposterous claims, and declaring their own unswerving determination to uphold academic authority and dignity. In the usual indirect way negotiations are carried on through intermediaries, very often by the old students' associations. The inevitable compromise is reached, and the strike fizzles out in a welter of speeches, a mistrustful exchange of compliments, and assurances of eternal concord. "I most bitterly rue this unwelcome happening, for which I am solely responsible owing to my lack of virtue." It could only be an Oriental who would say that. It sounds like the speech placed in the mouth of the five-year-old Emperor of China at the time of the revolution in 1911: "I have reigned for three years, and have always acted conscientiously in the interests of the

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people, but I have lacked political skill, and all the present troubles are my own fault."

In any country bookish studies and lack of real experience are apt to make adolescents theoretically-minded rather than practical. Young Orientals are in a class by themselves when it comes to grabbing at an idea or an ideal, exalting and extolling it, worshipping it, and hypnotizing themselves with it, until they get tired of it and pick up another. Numbers of earnest young men feel weighed down by the present evils of society, but buoyed up by the thought that they are fully qualified to be its saviours. However fantastically varied their ideas may be, they have at least this in common: they are severely disapproved of by the powers that be, who lump all such notions under that one comprehensive heading 'dangerous thought.'

Long before what are supposed to be modern dictatorships sprang up in Europe the official prescribing of national thought and conduct was already well established in Japan—in fact, it has merely continued without interruption from the old feudal days. It is not just a case of official sanction being required for the adoption of new or popular ideas. It is a matter of compulsory and general acceptance of what is laid down by the State authorities, and anything outside this category is strictly taboo, under the heading of 'dangerous thought.' This extraordinary phrase, to which I have already made some reference, would be an unconsciously funny satire on ignorant officialdom if it were not for the tragic fate awaiting the many victims who fall under its ban. No distinctions are drawn; indeed, one doubts the ability of the official mind to differentiate among the items included in its comprehensive veto. Liberalism, socialism, radicalism, futurism, bolshevism, internationalism,

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and a lot more are shovelled in together as one and the same thing—'dangerous thought.' If the terms theism, catechism, cataclysm, and square prism ever came to the official ear they would promptly be placed on the black list.

The ideas most hated and feared by the Japanese authorities are the political theories emanating from their huge neighbour Soviet Russia, which, for the matter of that, has been causing similar perturbation all over the world. Any Japanese returning from abroad, especially from places where he may have come into contact with Soviet influence, is narrowly watched for Bolshevik tendencies or activities. To carry on a correspondence with anyone in Russia would bring down the darkest suspicion. Even foreigners may find themselves under surveillance, as supposed disseminators of proletarian doctrines. Imported books are nominally scrutinized and controlled, and yet one sees volumes, in various languages, dealing with Marxism, exploitation of the working class, the evils of the capitalist system, and all the other *clichés*—right under the noses of police agents sent to do the round of the bookshops.

It may well be imagined that young Japanese enthusiastically embrace political theories, without either inclination or opportunity to make a reasonable comparison between the promised Paradise and the way things work out in practice. There are certainly some really well-educated Japanese who have seen and thought things out in other parts of the world, and who could help to restore the mental balance of their nation's impetuous youth. But these potential and valuable guides are not given any chance to be useful; a description of things as they are is the last thing desired by official autocrats.

In their anxiety to deal with constant outbreaks of

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'dangerous thought' the Japanese authorities have even been known to call in the advice of well-experienced foreigners, and, as might be expected, to shrink from acting upon it. No matter how plainly an independent outsider might portray conditions elsewhere, how clearly and reasonably he might make comparisons, how convincingly he might show to his young hearers that what is good for one country is not necessarily so for another; no matter if he not only urged true loyalty on impressionable youngsters, but could also give them conclusive reasons for it—in the official mind there would be but one thought: the risk of foreign corruption to the nation's youth.

The authorities have but one method, to demand subservient obedience and to apply rigorous repression. However well they may have reduced both young and old to silent docility, they are never satisfied or sure. As aptly summarized by one shrewd observer who had spent a lifetime in the East, "They are sitting on the safety-valve, and they know it." We have already reviewed some of the methods by which the anxious powers that be seek to forestall and repress the outbreaks they so much fear. It is natural that this political persecution falls most heavily on those who are chiefly interested in thoughts and ideas—teachers and professors, as well as many of their young charges.

Besides the constant supervision and investigation by the police there is a widespread system of spying, especially in schools, hostels, and students' organizations. No one knows but what his neighbour or comrade, in class- or common-room, is an official agent who makes regular reports on the words and actions of his fellows. There is full scope for the *agent provocateur*, whose business it is to

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start up some secret political movement and then hand over the names of all the conspirators.

As we have seen, when dealing with police organization in general, these routine methods are supplemented by special campaigns from time to time, to bring in a larger number of suspects and to stamp still lower the signs of unrest. And once again it is the student class that suffers most. Misguided or even totally innocent young fellows, and girls too, find themselves under arrest, bewildered as to the reason, tricked, and coerced into giving evidence and making confessions dictated to them. They are entirely in the hands of the police, who, it is to be remembered, conduct their own preliminary inquiries, and use any means to obtain convictions. Imprisonment in uncomfortable and unhealthy quarters, starvation, torture, and even death are the lot of the unhappy victims. "Suicide in prison" is considered a sufficient explanation in fatal cases. No public inquiry, much less complete exposure, is thought necessary—or even possible. Worthy citizens would never think of questioning the police or the underlying authority, as that would only jeopardize their own safety, without helping those already in danger.

Trials of political prisoners drag on for months, or even years. They culminate in death sentences for the most desperate offenders and a long range of imprisonment for others. What little public interest has been aroused dies down again, and the authorities hope that unrest has been suppressed—at least for a time.

As in the case of other social conditions, it will be a long time before the full story of political disturbances is known—if, indeed, it is ever told. The authorities cannot be expected to reveal what goes on behind the scenes, and if

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anyone were so unwise as to inquire too closely he might find himself also behind the scenes, in a rather unpleasant *rôle*, or, in the case of an independent foreign observer, he would be politely but insistently shown the door.

### 3. FOREIGN STUDIES

The presence of so many foreigners in the country is often the cause of a dilemma for the leaders of the nation's affairs. On the one hand, these outsiders are extremely useful in helping with the business of Westernization; on the other hand, there is always the danger of their getting to know too much about the country from the inside. By far the most numerous of these strangers within the gates, the missionaries, though not actually invited to come in, are, as we have seen, allowed to stay because they bring along funds subscribed by well-meaning folks at home, thus actually paying for the privilege of building and maintaining orphanages, private schools, and other institutions of social welfare. That the native Christian communities would very much like to have the handling of the finances, without any irksome responsibility to alien Westerners, goes without saying. This, however, is no peculiarity on their part. At least one American business firm in Yokohama has been requested kindly to leave its capital there, but to send all its American heads of departments back home.

Apart from the technical advisers mentioned previously, engaged by private firms and State departments, the most numerous class of Europeans and Americans actually invited to Japan includes the teachers of foreign languages, literature, commerce, and other subjects at the Government

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colleges. The favourite method is to engage a young man for a term of three years, after which they like him all the better if he clears off back home, with pleasant impressions of charming welcomes, sunshine and butterflies, flowery *kimono* and evergreen landscapes, perpetual smiles and touching farewells all fresh in his mind, and likely to remain there. Some cynics declare that the foreign teacher is expected to stay just long enough for the native *intelligentsia* to pick his brains, after which they will prefer to bring a fresh man out and repeat the process. True it is that they regard it as a mistake for a foreigner to stay on long. An ordinarily observant individual is far too apt to start learning quite a lot of things about the country, while at the same time turning a conveniently dull eye to the Open Door through which he really ought to get out.

No matter how long the stay, however, a foreigner must not expect to make real contact with Japanese people, either collectively or individually. However well disposed he may be, he will never be allowed to forget that he is an outsider. Even the kindest of missionaries who have spent a lifetime in the country regretfully admit the impossibility of having a straight talk with a Japanese on any subject whatever. To begin with, the very mental processes of East and West are far apart. This was very aptly expressed by a Japanese professor: "You Westerners think in a straight line, while we think roundabout." If you ask anyone there about the weather, and even if he knows it is raining outside, he will reply to the effect that as far as it is possible to judge in the circumstances, and providing there is no great likelihood of disagreement with the opinion he desires tentatively to offer, there is some considerable possibility that the meteorological conditions



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will ultimately become reasonably propitious. If anyone asks you, for instance, if you play ping-pong, you immediately begin to wonder what he is driving at, what is really in his mind, and after long practice you may even guess the answer before he has worked the conversation round to what he wants to find out—how much you paid for your new summer suit, or whether any of your forefathers came over with William of Orange. Japanese gentlemen get inwardly annoyed at foreigners who become experts in this game of running round the mental mulberry-bush.

An accomplishment highly to be recommended to the foreign visitor or resident in Japan is the art of superficiality. Diplomats are right when at public banquets they declare themselves most at home in Japan, for it is the home of skin-deep amicability. Its formality is reflected in the language, which is still at the stage where it consists largely of the exchange of certain set phrases. A sharp observer soon makes his summary of things, but even the most patient and friendly confess themselves baffled and disappointed, not only by the stupendous vanity and furtive antagonism of the Japanese, but also by their sheer inability to get beyond the surface of things. An outsider especially is not supposed to hear anything but complimentary remarks, whatever may be going on behind them. It is an old custom for Japanese newspapers to publish the vilest personal attacks on individuals, for there is no law of libel covering such defamation. It is a favourite pastime to make foreign residents the target of such attacks, there being no limit to the scurrilous imagination exercised in manufacturing the most absurd statements. Unless the victim happens to notice the offensive paragraphs in that particular edition he will remain in ignorance of this clandestine mud-

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slinging—not that he could take any steps against it, even if he found it out. He will still be encircled by the blandest of smiles, and will not see the sniggers of triumph over the hated foreigner.

The outsider, for his part, is expected to offer nothing but compliments, whatever his private expression of opinion may be. If he sufficiently cultivates the art of fulsome flattery he may even be lauded for his remarkable insight into the soul of the nation. If, however, he deviates ever so slightly from the path of adulation, in a well-meaning but misguided attempt at impartiality and moderation, he will be discredited as one who misunderstands “Our Country,” and execrated as an ignorant and prejudiced enemy.

You may tell your French friends what you think of their financial policy or national idiosyncrasies and get away with it; you may torment your American acquaintances with your ribaldry about graft or the Statue of Liberty and be forgiven; you might even start an Englishman on the way to realizing his own complacent insularity; but you must never, never expect the true Japanese to have the slightest glimmering of any opinion except their own, on any subject whatsoever.

Even among foreign residents of long standing there are some who from sheer complaisance or inertia allow themselves to be spellbound into taking the Nipponese at their own haughty valuation. Though proud nationals are used enough to the ready compliments of transient visitors, they are almost pathetically pleased at old stagers who put in a good word for them before the court of world opinion, but they do not necessarily put their overflowing gratitude into practical shape. On the other hand, there are very

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practical-minded foreigners who find that the publication of complimentary propaganda can be made to have a certain financial value.

The classic example of the disappointed champion of Japan was Lafcadio Hearn, that strange writer in an earlier period of the country's modern development. Physically and mentally he was a curiosity, being born of parents from widely differing European races. After drifting about for some years in America he eventually reached Japan, where he settled down to the profession of extolling everything Oriental and decrying everything Western. To call him a blind worshipper is true enough, for he was so short-sighted that he could not see many of the things about which he wrote voluminously. Though such a fanatical admirer of things Japanese he could not read or write the language. And when, as a complimentary gesture to the nation of his adoption, he assumed Japanese nationality, he was soon disagreeably surprised to find that this entailed a considerable reduction in salary—to local standards. His later writings reveal something of his disillusionment, but he has been posthumously honoured for the works which showed the world a Japan in a very romantic and picturesque setting. Every one who can claim even the slightest connexion with the great author, even as the neighbour of a relation of a class-mate of one of his former pupils, seeks his full share of reflected glory.

It is remarkable that the first Englishman who lived in Japan, about three hundred years ago, has given us a fine picture of people and life as true now as it was then. Will Adams, with a few fellow-mariners, landed storm-driven and almost derelict on the shores of this strange land. Under the official guise of hospitality he was kept



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**大阪朝日新聞特電**

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**上海戦線の金澤の團**

吳江總攻撃をり本誌特  
洲員決死の戦線香  
采り其後上成

二月十九日午後七時

關東軍司令部

**報新新特電**

島田部開業結果

島田部開業結果

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農務

WAR NEWS AND ELECTION RESULTS



THE DEATH OF CHANG-TSO-JIN, AS DRAMATIZED IN JAPAN

## Young Nippon

in perpetual detention, while his imperious hosts drew full advantage from the new Western ideas and contrivances brought by their captive guest. He speaks of the native superficiality, suspicious antagonism, endless procrastination, and devious ambiguity; of the persistent domineering of these islanders, for all their supposed sweetness and gentleness. He makes some caustic comments on the Nipponese mentality, by which you may rob or even kill a man, and still have the right to insist that you acted as his friend. He remarks on the contrasts and contradictions, such as the artistic skill applied to ornaments and playthings, and the clumsy inefficiency of everyday implements—together a striking picture of things as they still are to-day.

Without worrying overmuch about the peculiar conditions, however, a foreigner in Japan is in a position to carry on one of the most interesting and extraordinary pieces of study that the world offers. Incidentally, Japan is not by any means to be recommended as a first lesson in world study, as it would be rather overpowering to a beginner in the subject. Due experience elsewhere will give balance, not to mention a certain beneficial hardening, for the study of the world's most curious country, which is neither East nor West, but a complicated mixture of the two. And the foreign teacher is exceptionally well placed for seeing the country from this point of view; he is directly concerned with the introduction of Western ideas, and he works among the *intelligentsia*, the exponents of national thought.

At first sight the work of a foreign teacher in Japan would seem refreshingly easy. His time-table includes from fifteen to twenty lectures per week, which at that is

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a good deal fuller than those of his Japanese colleagues, some of whom have no more than five or so, their average all round being about ten. They may be seen popping in at any hour of the day, and going off home when their particular lectures are over, or else staying in the common-room to chat with the others, quite a lot of time being devoted to the favourite theme, "Our Nation as Conqueror of the World," in numerous versions and variations.

In addition to the routine classes a foreign teacher will find himself with plenty to do, his further activities being extensible as far as he cares to make them. Sometimes he feels that he has been brought out there not so much to teach the students themselves as to be a sort of walking encyclopædia on things Western for his Japanese colleagues, especially those engaged in foreign languages and kindred subjects. After years of explaining Western ways to Orientals one feels capable of explaining anything to anybody. It certainly is excellent practice, not only in general knowledge, but also in making things clear to people who have no chance of getting to know them at first hand, and to whom, moreover, such things are as different as possible from their own surroundings. One gets used to questions on a wide range of subjects: sandwich flags, window envelopes, mitres, flying buttresses, the pronunciation of Cholmondeley, Beauchamp, Caius, *et alia*. Even sporting expressions such as 'stumped,' 'bowled,' 'below the belt,' can be demonstrated, or illustrated by means of pictures, of which I have always had a huge collection for use anywhere, and also by cinema films, of which I took a great number while on a visit to Europe in order to show our ways of daily life to people on the far side of the world.

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Due attention must be given to colloquialisms, such as 'swinging the lead,' 'passing the buck,' 'dodging the column,' or 'selling a pup,' though these always sound just a trifle funny in the mouths of dignified Japanese professors. Daylight saving and putting money on a horse are two pursuits that cause them mystification. Often and often their questions are mystifying, and require a lot of searching to answer. One day, right in the middle of a discussion on building, in which, for example, I was explaining that what is known as the 'first floor' in America and Japan is called the 'ground floor' in European countries, a Japanese colleague suddenly asked me what is meant by a 'straight story.' Still thinking architecturally, I asked him to elucidate, and, without the slightest intention of making a pun, he gave the example he had in mind: "The witness was unable to tell a straight story."

To most Japanese students and savants the term 'foreign studies' means getting hold of literary works in other languages and translating them into Japanese. In view of the utter lack of anything in common, either mentally or linguistically, some of these versions must be things of wonder. Not that that bothers the translator. Working on the Chinese principle of "*Cha bu do!*" he is ever ready to substitute an approximation if need be. If a foreign adviser is at hand he will be given plenty to do, and, if he has the time for it, he will most likely find the business highly interesting. One morning I was asked to give the context of four poetical quotations which a colleague wished to incorporate in a book he was preparing. Two could be identified offhand, and another was soon verified, but the last one required hours and hours of hunting in all available works of reference.



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On another occasion a professor asked me for the origin of a phrase in Carlyle. Twenty-three was the number of books I referred to this time, though I made no count of the time required. The phrase in question was quoted in two or three works of reference, but it was always referred back to the same passage in Carlyle—probably the one and only time it was ever used, in all the literatures of the world. Still a third translator called in my aid and goodwill, off and on for months and months, in going meticulously through an abstruse modern work on philosophy, and finally rewarded me with profuse thanks. Next day he came along with just one more little question. He understood all the thought and subject-matter of the book, but he was still puzzled by this one word—‘that,’ used as a relative pronoun.

It will be seen that Oriental students of Western languages have a strong preference for the most abstruse literature they can find. One may well ask how much of it they can really grasp, when some of them show such a startling vagueness about the text itself. The influence of their own old picture-writing and ideographs is to be seen in their piecemeal methods. What, for instance, is one to say when asked to explain an idiom such as ‘having a high old time’ or ‘mad as a hatter’ word by word?

Foreign teachers in Japan often wish that both colleagues and students would be less ambitious in attempting such difficult material, and pay more careful attention to simpler, ordinary things. It does seem a little top-heavy when a man who cannot frame or understand a plain sentence in any foreign language is presuming to interpret to his fellow-countrymen the metaphysics of Shakespeare or the ideology of Goethe. It is the old story: reputation rather

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than actual if less spectacular achievement. A German lecturer once suggested to his Japanese college authorities that certain classes needed more than the one hour a week allotted on the time-table. He was assured that he need not worry; his students would be able to state that they had had tuition from a native German—whether they had learned anything or not.

In most countries the study of a foreign language is an artificial process, except for those who go to learn it in its native surroundings. As the Japanese find their own tongue unknown in international trade and affairs, they are obliged to learn English and other languages, though they use them in peculiar ways. The extraordinary attitude of the Japanese towards foreign studies would be hard to comprehend in other countries. A very important official of theirs once remarked, with becoming dignity, that proficiency in foreign languages is the sign of an inferior race. This is also typical of their superior condescension towards foreign ideas in general—at the same time that these are so avidly imitated as being essential to progress. Such ideas must be looked over selectively, and if deemed worthy be given the honour of being adopted, or, rather, adapted to Japanese taste. And if the imitation disagrees with the original, so much the worse for the original. When a Japanese lecturer was once reading a paper to a scientific gathering in London a member of the audience stood up and regretfully complained that he could not understand a word, as the visitor appeared to be speaking in his own native tongue. The speaker insisted that he was using English, and continued reading. The chairman tactfully offered to read the paper for him, but this assistance was declined, and the confident lecturer

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went on to the bitter end, quite unperturbed by these silly interruptions.

And so, when foreign teachers in Japan suggest that they should be working mainly with first-year learners of English, on the principle of starting at the beginning, their queer proposal is coldly received. They have been brought so far with such expense and trouble, and they should not offer to demean themselves to the task of teaching beginners. Surely they owe it to the dignity of all concerned to restrict their sphere to the higher educational establishments, where base matters of groundwork give no concern, and where advanced studies are the rule, whether the foundation is there or not. It follows that by the time students come to a foreign teacher, in one of the higher colleges, they have done five years in some sort of English with Japanese teachers in secondary schools. Although the geographical situation of Japan prevents these gentlemen from hopping across to countries where the language is spoken, as people in Europe can do, yet one would fervently wish that they might at least take advantage of contact with foreign residents, wherever possible, and avail themselves of other resources at hand. However freely and tactfully assistance may be offered, it will most likely be declined. Most Japanese simply cannot bear being shown any mistake they may happen to make. Rather than risk their reputation for knowing a thing, they will prefer not to learn it at all. And if a teacher shows himself inclined to become too well acquainted with the foreigner the rest of the staff will bring pressure to bear on him, to show him the error of his ways.

A foreign teacher finds that his students are prone to magnifying the most gentle correction of errors in class-

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work to the extent of a national insult. Similarly, if he himself happens to mention any less admirable feature of his own country, such as slums, graft, or neglected agriculture, or if he speaks of some other nation beside his own as leading the world in any particular line of progress, he is regarded with horror as being very unpatriotic. And though these young fellows are frightfully scared of the mildest individual criticism, they are absolutely merciless to each other, going off into howls of laughter at the slightest mistake made by a classmate, thereby further depressing that self-confidence which is essential in learning a language, a quality in which they confess themselves already naturally lacking.

At the same time some of these youngsters are not one bit behind their seniors in the self-assurance with which they claim to have studied the most abstruse works in foreign literature. With the general inability to understand or make themselves understood in the simplest language, they will calmly affirm that they have completed their researches in Emerson, Walt Whitman, Gibbon, and other authors whose works are hardly familiar to most English-speaking people. No comment is supposed to be passed on this peculiar linguistic system, and when advanced students offer gems such as "Student study foreign language for appreciate thought of worldly famous man" no further comment seems to be necessary.

Here is an extract from a piece of English given by a Japanese professor for translation—and to commercial students at that:

It is this, that it appears, not only that these contraries do not admit each other, but that even such things as are not contrary to each other, and yet always possess contraries, do

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not appear to admit that idea which is contrary to the idea that exists in themselves, but, when it approaches, perish and depart.

It certainly would appear that something ought to "perish and depart." And after that it is not surprising to get this sort of thing, an actual example from a well-known Japanese firm:

Mrs. A. V.,

Dear Sir:—

We thanks for especially favoured with your kind patronage. In front of this time, we put place the local Section in our company for the sake of yours conviniences. Our chief aim is kindly, speedily, and as can be careful. If we receive an orders for over ten *yen* from you, will be send in carriage free with great care. In future send you an new price list, every new made or new consignment of goods.

We are. Yours truthfully,

M. N. & Co..

However one may snigger at this grotesque attempt at English, one is bound to admit that the ideas are there, expressed unmistakably in spite of the quaint diction. "Truthfully" is a common and unintentionally ingenious blending of the customary words "truly" and "faithfully." And at least some credit is due for the correct spelling of the word "receive," as well as for the carefully punctuated abbreviations. Within a few months of receiving this masterpiece I got another from the same firm, but evidently written by another clerk. This one I filed, and often used in class, as an example of good style and arrangement.

In spite of the natural difficulty which Japanese people plead for themselves in the matter of language-learning, they can do it, and do it very well, when they once drop the idea of feverishly dashing at the advanced stages, and

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when they work steadily through from the beginning. Although classes have the usual number of fellows who neither wish nor need to learn a foreign language, those who do take it seriously show a keenness and a remarkable standard of patient effort, at least equal to anything I have ever met in a pretty wide range of nationalities.

Most colleges have a foreign language society, organized mainly by the students themselves, like the various other clubs and associations going to make up their corporate life. The chief activities of the F.L.S. are the annual dramatic performances in their own assembly hall and the famous oratorical contests in which they take part with other colleges all over the country. The preparation for these contests usually entails infinite patience and attention, both for the speakers themselves and for the foreigner, if asked to coach them. And so closely attentive are these young men that at an inter-college oratorical contest not only do some say their piece in perfect English, but, humorously enough, the foreign teachers who act as judges can easily recognize the voice of their trainers—Varsity man, Californian, Londoner, or the man from Missouri.

Before any dramatic work can be attempted there must be the same intensive preparation, each individual being taken through his lines in turn, and reading them aloud dozens of times before memorizing or acting can begin.

In the case of a student with any special difficulty in pronunciation I would get him to practise the same sounds for a minute or two at a time, and several times a day, to attain accurate enunciation and intonation. There are not many countries where young men would show such perseverance and determination with apparently infantile repetitions, however important in the long run.

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Gestures, movements, and every bit of stagecraft have to be learned from the beginning and practised interminably, as these are entirely different in East and West. The Japanese way of beckoning a person, for example, would look to us like a signal telling some one to get down out of the way. In one of our lighter pieces a tallish student made an admirable London bobby in miniature, but he had to rehearse a good many times before he could satisfactorily walk on to the stage saying "Come this way, please," with the appropriate gesture.

Costumes and other accessories are quite unobtainable on the spot. They have therefore to be made out of nothing in particular, and they call for a good deal of ingenuity and patient work on the part of the foreign teacher's wife during the weeks that her husband is busy with many rehearsals. Our neighbours, M. and Mme Rueff, were extraordinarily clever at this twofold task, and the foreign plays they staged made it hard to believe that all this was going on in the distant East. We can never forget the really fine achievements of some of our young fellows. Work of this kind formed one of the pleasantest features of life out there.

In addition to their informal weekly meetings the members of the foreign language society are very keen on coming round to the foreign teacher's house. When unattached individuals make a habit of dropping in at any odd moment, as they do, and staying about for hours, this picturesque custom becomes a problem. We found that the best way to solve it is to arrange certain times for such visits. Little groups quickly form, and they thoroughly enjoy the experience of sitting round an English fireside, drinking tea, chatting away, and making themselves generally at home in these foreign surroundings. For those not

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interested in foreign languages we used to arrange a party now and then, inviting the football team or some other group. They certainly enjoyed it, and were adepts at amusing themselves. A bunch of young Nipponese engrossed in hunting the slipper or other round game is a sight to behold.

### 4. PLAY AND PARADE

And so it is highly interesting and useful to meet one's students outside the routine of ordinary work, to see them from other angles, as they go about their own activities. I had an especially good time with the football club. Within a week or two of my arrival a smiling and bowing deputation came along: "Sir, will you kindly coach us futboru?" I assented, but asked them which kind they were going to play, Soccer or Rugger—er—Association or Rugby. "We do not know, sir." I asked them what shape the ball was going to be, round, like this, or oval, like that. "Not yet decided, sir."

A few days later they proudly brought along a nice new, shiny, spherical ball. I told them that was for Soccer—and we started. I once thought that youngsters on the Continent were the limit when making their first acquaintance with English national games, which they so much wanted to learn. At Soccer at least twenty players would go rushing about the field, charging impartially at the ball and each other, yelling lustily, and sometimes the goalkeepers would come and join in. I had to make a new rule, not to be found in any code at home—the whistle goes for a foul if a player gets out of his place. It must be said that they made good progress, and developed clever team play in the true Continental style.



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In the East I found history repeating itself, so to speak, but more so. We must remember that with people so lately emerged from their medieval age games of any kind are still much nearer related to their origins in fighting and hunting. Many Japanese pastimes have a distinctly martial air. The same spirit is kept up in the playing of games introduced from abroad, at least in the initial stages, before the participants get used to the new order of things. A match may be looked upon as a sort of battle, in which the warriors seek to intimidate the enemy by ferocious yells as they dash wildly into the fray. During one such game in the early days our goalkeeper was charged by three opposing forwards at once; our full-backs dashed in to his aid, the rest of their forwards joined in, followed by all players within striking distance, so that in a few moments the ball was buried deep beneath a large heap of struggling, shrieking humanity. It being a match in which our club was engaged, I was not the referee, but merely a spectator on the line. However, as the student-referee was standing there petrified and the shindy was getting worse, I trotted on to the field and advised him to blow his whistle. He just goggled, so I took the unheard-of liberty of blowing it for him. The layers in the struggling heap began to peel themselves off one by one. At last our goalkeeper came to light, still manfully clutching the ball. He gave himself a shake, and found that he was still all in one piece. After a free kick to clear the air the game proceeded on more normal lines.

One Monday morning, after a friendly match over the week-end, our left full-back turned up at college with his neck in a bandage. He had been bitten by an opponent. Dark deeds are heard of perhaps in a Rugby scrum, but

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to get one's teeth into an adversary at Soccer must surely be a world's record.

However impossible it may sound, such stirring incidents are not due to real roughness, but to sheer over-excitement, and, as shown, they mostly disappear as the players gain experience. As in other countries, young fellows in general reach a pretty high standard in these newly acquired pursuits. Truth to tell, they are apt to be over-studious, especially on the theoretical side. At play, as at all times, the Japanese take themselves very seriously. Schools and colleges are the national centres of sport and athletics, and there is ample scope for the keenest rivalry. The league system is not much known; at certain times of the year all the teams in a district meet for a tournament, in football, tennis, ping-pong, or whatever it may be. A Soccer eleven, for example, may have three matches or even more on the Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Elaborate ceremonial is indispensable. First of all the teams line up and bow in unison to the chairman and other dignitaries, who then make long speeches on important subjects, from the national duty of physical fitness to the proud destiny of Nippon as master and mentor of the world. The team captains and the officials bow to each other, and proceed to open the envelopes containing the draw for the games to be played. Before beginning the two rival teams line up at the centre of the field, facing each other, with the referee, linesmen, goal-judges, scorers, and other officials on one side. More bowing, then the two captains step forward to perform the ceremony which is the Oriental equivalent of tossing up for choice of ends. *Jan-ken-poh*, as it is called, is used in all such cases of decision by chance. Each captain extends his forearm in front of him, making three

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sharp downward movements—*jan, ken, poh*. On the third the hand is made to show one of three signs; flat to represent paper, the clenched fist for a stone, or the first two fingers for a pair of scissors. Now, paper can wrap round a stone; therefore paper wins; but scissors can cut, so they win against paper. Stone cannot be cut by scissors, and in that case it wins. It is a quaint and ready method, each sign standing to win or to lose against the others. If both the rivals show the same sign at once they repeat till a decision is reached.

To mention a scorer at ordinary football may arouse the curiosity of those who associate this functionary rather with cricket. In Japan, however, the thing must be done properly. Every self-respecting club has its printed score-book for every match and every game. Not only goals, but also the goal-kicks, corners, throw-ins, and other details are carefully recorded on a chart, which is also divided to show the course of the game in five-minute stages, so that the whole diagram looks something like the bowler's analysis in cricket, but on a much larger scale.

All this is only in keeping with the formality observed by the Japanese in everything they undertake. It has been said that their sportsmen arrive at a match with a text-book in one hand and a carefully written speech in the other. In training a good deal of time is devoted to the study of text-books, diagrams, and the like, however difficult such theories may be found in practice. During pauses on the field hypothetical moves and countermoves are worked out with bits of stick or pebbles, or by scratches in the dusty soil. Before a game the team captain gathers his men round for a last discussion on tactics—'going into a huddle,' as it is called in America.

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Just as the English winter game of football has been adopted all over the world, and in some cases all the year round, so American baseball is on the increase in many countries. And, in spite of their difference in stature, the Japanese have developed "a good tight game of ball," as their critics tell them. One of the most illuminating games I saw was in Peking, between the best team from the American garrisons in China and the champion university team from Tokyo, at that moment on tour. The Yankee soldiers looked big enough to eat their opponents, but from start to finish they were well held; the Japanese nine worked together as a solid team.

So seriously is baseball taken in Japan that professional players are brought over from America to coach the big university clubs. And these experts from the land of baseball have a high opinion of their pupils. If there is one criticism they have to offer, it is that the Japanese hesitate to take chances on their own initiative, but are prone to reduce everything to rules and regulations on paper—a comment which applies not only to their ways of playing games.

There is something pathetic in the sight and sound of a baseball match in Japan, with the players *yah-yah-ing* at each other in the best American style. It seems a pity, in fact, that any of the ruder and rougher games should be adopted from abroad. Japanese Rugby clubs just about hold their own with the scratch foreign teams made up from English business men in the big port towns. What they lack in size and weight they make up in speed and agility—though one does hear that they put a bit of ju-jitsu into a tackle now and then. In spite of their excitability, however, Nipponese sportsmen are essentially gentle and courteous,

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and it seems fitting that they do well in the politer forms of sport. Their tennis-players have won golden opinions all over the world, not only for their skill and endurance, but also as real gentlemen. Swimming is another branch in which they excel, even if we did hear just a bit too much about it after the Olympic Games at Los Angeles. Incidentally, when we were round that way a year or so later, we noticed a bunch of little men very busy with their cameras inside the then deserted stadium. Sure enough, they were a party of Japanese, on a Government tour, and joyfully photographing the scene of their nation's victories. One of them turned out to be an old student of ours.

Whether from small physique or lack of experience, however, the Japanese representatives do not yet generally distinguish themselves in world competition, though with time they will make progress in this respect as well. Their simple, frugal ways of life produce the stamina for which they are well known, but diet and other factors often act in the opposite direction. As exceptions to the proverbial smallness of the racial stature, one meets some fairly big fellows, especially among those who go in for games. Here again, however, we have the ever-present contradiction. Some of the finest athletes suffer severely from strain, particularly when a few champions have to uphold the prestige of their college or nation in many contests. Some of our best men were carried off by tuberculosis, just as chest trouble killed poor Miss Hitomi, Japan's greatest woman athlete. And the fate of Sato, of Davis Cup fame, who flung himself overboard in mid-ocean, recalls the old *samurai* who would die rather than accept defeat and disgrace. Japanese sportsmen are modest enough in victory, but if beaten they take it terribly to heart. Our

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footballers hung their heads and even wept, and my well-meaning efforts to cheer them up were not at all appreciated. The gloom would soon pass, however, and they were their own cheerfully grinning, chattering selves again.

It may be said that schools and colleges are the only centres of sport throughout the country. With the exception of a few old students' organizations, people in general do not go in for games. At the week-end there is no sight of thousands of active figures on many playing fields, as in Europe. On the other hand, the various school grounds present an animated scene. There is nearly always some championship going on—baseball, athletics, swimming, judo, fencing, wrestling, tennis, football, or ski-ing in the snowy season and regions. Preliminary competitions determine the district champions, and these go on for the national finals. The sports magazines are never at a loss for copy. The never-ending round of championships provides material for reports at all times and places. And the innumerable Press photographs of teams and individuals provide much-coveted publicity for thousands of youngsters, from the city idol to the village hero. But then, having a photograph taken is an indispensable part of any event in Japan. A family picnic in the park may include the services of a professional photographer to provide a memento of the occasion.

The big university matches, especially in baseball, arouse tremendous excitement. Thousands of spectators pack all available accommodation, and even greater numbers far and near follow the course of the play by means of broadcast reports, or by watching the moving figures on the huge outlined plan of the field, set up on the wall of a newspaper office or other public organization. All this

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enthusiasm provides an important source of income, but the clubs are finding themselves faced with the usual problems arising when sport is made a business.

While foreign games are becoming so popular, a large number of students cling to the older pursuits—archery, which is held in high honour, judo, which is not only a form of wrestling, but also a cult which demands strict ritual and conduct from its devotees, and fencing, in which we see the direct descendant of the old two-handed sword fighting. Before these fencing contests begin the experienced instructors and their pupils squat on the floor round the smooth boarded space. The two contestants in each bout don their accoutrements: a padded leather helmet with a strong barred mask in front, a long padded tunic like the ancient body armour, and a skirt like the customary *hakama*. Each one holds a fencing stick made of a number of bamboo strips bound together, to represent the two-handed sword. At a signal from the master of ceremonies they salute each other and rise from their squatting position. Then they move cautiously round, each one seeking an opening for a blow, and striving to anticipate his opponent's intentions. Gradually they warm up to the contest, and the place resounds to the crack and thud of the blows and the warlike cries of the two rivals. Points are awarded for success in striking certain points on the protective armour, corresponding to vital spots in a sword duel. There is no thrusting, and blows are parried mostly direct on the stick, the hands being protected by thick, hard gloves. Victory for one or the other is signalled by the master, after which the two again salute each other and retire, giving place to the next pair.

These ancient arts are fostered by the authorities as

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maintaining the national spirit. Japan is by no means the only country where physical exercises and sports in general are officially encouraged as a direct contribution to military training. But in no other country is the style of this training, like military affairs as a whole, so very peculiar. And of all the curious features of this troublous country its military system may appear most fantastic to Western people, though it is one of the most dangerously disturbing factors in world affairs.

For many years Army officers have been attached to all secondary schools and colleges. Their duties are not merely to run a sort of amateur officers' training corps, but to carry out the official scheme of military training, which, like military service for the young men a few years later, is compulsory and universal. It can be imagined that no objection or claim to exemption on the part of the students is for one moment entertained. One or two foreign Christian schools have attempted to protest, but these have easily been brought into line, either by direct action on the part of more nationalistic students elsewhere or by the Government's threat to withhold recognition from the school and its graduating diploma. Military training has now been introduced into girls' schools, where rifle shooting, gas-masks, and such things have become matters of feminine interest. For the boys and young men military responsibility does not even cease with their service as Army conscripts. After that they are expected to join the local patriotic association, whose members can be armed and turned into troops at a moment's notice.

A few years ago we used to see military drill once or twice a week, and manœuvres once or twice a year. The latter were treated by the students as an irksome joke.



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The sick parade that morning would be a big one, but the happy malingerers might be seen playing games or going for a walk during the day. Sore feet, exhaustion, and other ailments among those who had gone through with the exercises caused a large number of absences on the following day, so that at one time a holiday was granted to let the budding troops get over their exertions.

More recently, however, things have been tightened up. Squads at drill on the sports-ground, which naturally serves as a splendid parade-ground too, may be observed at almost any time of the day or week. In addition, the attached Army officers give lectures on map-reading, tactics, and similar subjects. The gymnastic instructors are ex-Army men, and it is difficult to draw any distinction between physical and military training. Field-days are much more frequent and exacting. Operations are carried out by forces including Army battalions and large bodies of schoolboys and students. From an early hour the rattle of rifles and the banging of guns can be heard, as the youngsters fire off percussion caps or blank cartridge, or go charging with blood-curdling yells across the empty rice-fields.

During what is called a war against China, or at other times of national celebration, military occasions fall thick and heavy. In addition to routine drills and things students and professors spend a great part of their time going to the station to give troops a warm send-off, or an enthusiastic return welcome, or to receive the ashes of soldiers killed, or in solemnizing another splendid victory.

In all this there may have been little to suggest any difference from other countries with strong martial tendencies. It is only when we take a close look at things on the spot, however, that we can realize the tragi-comedy of

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the whole business. One hardly knows whether to laugh or weep at the sight of these boy-soldiers. As we have noted, the everyday uniform is readily adaptable to military purposes. Whatever its colour, on parade they have to wear yellow cotton puttees, which are always on sale at a shop near the school, along with pens, ink, exercise books, paper handkerchiefs, rice-boxes, and many other educational requisites. Rifles, belts, packs, and ammunition are kept in the school armoury, a special building which is always closely supervised. But footgear is left to choice, and shows a variety which would give our old sergeant-major (may he rest in peace!) just as many different kinds of fits. It is a trifle odd to glance down the ranks and count the boots and the shoes, of leather, rubber, or canvas. We have seen even straw sandals, wooden *geta*, and bare feet on parade. And it is just this medley of footwear that serves to emphasize another highly comical feature of parade as it is done. After the usual numbering off and right turn the young heroes march off with a curiously stiff-legged gait, as laid down in regulations. On the parade-ground, when executing certain movements, either individually or collectively, they are required to perform what is supposed to be a reproduction of the goose-step. This looks outlandish enough even when carried out by trained Prussian guards, but when imitated by short-limbed Japanese it is beyond description. And this is only one of the many travesties perpetrated by the martial leaders of Nippon in trying to copy from the Prussian military model they so much admired.

It goes almost without saying that military training and service are heartily detested by the students themselves. Among so many free-and-easy features of college life it

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is the one occasion when they have literally and absolutely to toe the line. They hate it for other obvious reasons, too, but they dare not say a word. Like their elders the grown-up citizens in general, they are well tamed by their military masters.

## CHAPTER IX

### *A Martial Nation*

#### I. MILITARY AUTOCRATS

A most essential fact to remember in Far Eastern affairs is that where Japan is concerned the rest of the world is dealing not with a nation in the ordinary sense, but with its small and autocratic set of military leaders. The Japanese national constitution is such that the Army and Navy are not in the slightest degree responsible to Parliament (or, rather, the Orientalized form of that national assembly), or even to the inner circle which controls the Government. To an unprecedented degree they can command the resources of the country and its people, and no one dare for a moment question their authority to do so. As a result there is the extraordinary situation that while the Government gives full support to the operations of these independent generals and admirals, and even profits by their undertakings, the Foreign Office can always turn to the world with the usual plea of "*Shikata ga nai!*"—complete inability to control the martial adventurers.

This military autocracy is no new thing in the life of the nation. It is no adapted or intensified imitation from the West, but a custom handed down from time immemorial. On this point it is useful to contrast the two peoples of the Far East. The Chinese, for all their apparent truculence and wordiness in dispute, are essentially peace-loving. As a rule they will take any steps, even long ones in the opposite direction, to avoid brawling or fighting, which

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they regard as being in bad taste. Not that they can be accused of any faint-heartedness, however, when occasion arises for real courage. History shows that while they took a good deal for granted by way of taxation and other impositions on the part of governors, either local or regional, even a small community would steadily resist if such burdens became unduly heavy, and it would bring about the removal of the obnoxious tyrant. And in modern times the Chinese have shown that with due training they can become good soldiers, even with Western weapons. But martial glory has never had any charms for these people; in their social order the warrior has always been given a very low place. In Japan, on the contrary, the military caste has always occupied the highest rank.

The obsession of the Japanese military leaders as to their sacred power and authority is perforce increased by the whole manner of their existence. During training Army and Navy officers must limit attention rigidly to matters directly concerned with their profession. One can see a good deal of truth in the story of the cadet who was reprimanded for wasting his time on reading a translation of Jules Verne's *Voyage au Centre de la Terre*, which, in spite of its title, was not considered a suitable contribution to the course of submarine instruction on which he was at the moment engaged. Right through their career, too, this narrowness of outlook is intensified. These professional officers have little or no contact with anything outside their own strict routine. The one idea fixed in their minds is the high destiny of Japan as conqueror of the world and their own implicit duty in its fulfilment. High or low, they are fully aware of the importance of their position, of the awe in which they are held by common soldiers and civilians alike.

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The authority of the military commanders is brought strongly to bear on the nation's young manhood, over which they have absolute control. Of the conscripts called up each year the best are given the option of joining the Navy, among whose rank and file, therefore, is found the pick of what technical and other ability the nation possesses. Young fellows who have done military training at any of the Government's higher educational establishments may also be given a preference in their assignments to various branches of the Army. From the rest the requisite numbers are taken to fill up the battalions and divisions of ordinary troops.

The life of the Japanese conscript is hard, desperately hard when compared with most things of the kind in the West, though it may not be far below the standard of living from which many recruits have come. And hardening is the chief process through which they must go. Accommodation and food are of the most Spartan kind. A frozen lump of boiled rice, for example, is not exactly a luxurious meal on a long march in winter. And men who fail to survive the rigours of training are considered to deserve disgrace rather than any succour. Especially during long treks on ski through the mountains, it has been known for men to be left behind, with death in the snow as the penalty of their failure to keep pace with the column.

Strict control is exercised on the conscripts even outside their arduous duties. If allowed out of their quarters the younger men are watched by their seniors, who are detailed for the purpose. The greatest care is taken that no newspapers or other doubtful influences may contaminate the national fervour of the youthful mind. The sacred mission of the all-conquering nation, and the solemn duty of

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unquestioning obedience on the part of all its citizens, is a precept which is constantly drilled into these young men, even when they have at last finished their conscript service, and are told to join the local patriotic association in their town or village.

It is with unconscious candour that Japanese writers so often point out that the modern history of their country may be divided into three periods of prosperity dating from three successful wars, the boom each time declining till the next war restored the nation's fortunes. The glorious campaigns in question were against China in 1894-95, against Russia in 1904-5, and the World War, in which, quaintly enough, the Japanese spokesmen are convinced their nation played a decisive part. When the full history of Eastern affairs comes to be written, however, Japan's meteoric success will appear largely as the result of extraordinary luck in bringing off an enormous bluff. In this respect the Nipponese are the spoiled children of good fortune, and it is not surprising that it has gone to their heads. It is quite natural that the national periodicals which recall the good old days of profitable victories should aid in the call for fresh military undertakings.

The fact is, however, that the Japanese have never been in a real war—and, for the sake of the population in general, the millions of ordinary people who are jogging along as best they can and doing what their leaders tell them, their best friends fervently hope that they never will be involved in a full-sized conflict. As we shall see, Japan has never really faced a Western nation, and her geographical position has helped her to avoid any such disagreeable task. Her leaders know that if they were at any time so unwise as to offer or accept a challenge with one of the

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Western Powers, distant though they be, the country itself could not stand the strain of modern war, owing to its lack of economic resources and its other weaknesses. In view of the everlasting mental strife there must be between the two considerations, their vast dreams of world dominion on the one hand, and the haunting fear of their own disabilities on the other, it is no wonder that Nipponese nationalists present such psychological contradictions.

### 2. EXPANSION

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Japan had not long emerged from her own complete medievalism, but already considered herself well started on the path towards modernization and world power, she was eager to try out her new-found Western weapons on her backward neighbour, China, whose plight may be imagined from the fact that her defenders were still at the stage of using paper screens to ward off shells and bullets. And from the moment of that first easy triumph Japan showed the hand that she has ever since been playing—to gain power and territory on the Asiatic mainland. There is a significant resemblance between her more recent encroachments and the demands made upon China in that first modern treaty nearly half a century ago. Her first terms of peace went so far as to include her claim to occupy a large area of Manchuria, as well as vital strategic points in China such as Shanhaikwan, the northern gateway on the coast of Pe-chih-li, together with Taku and Tientsin, at the mouth of the Pei-ho, commanding the approach to Peking, the Chinese capital itself. It was also proposed that China should pay her enemy an indemnity equal to about thirty million pounds sterling, to



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grant Japan special privileges in trade, and to withdraw her own control from Korea—which the Japanese had already marked for their own possession.

Another parallel between then and now is found in the appeal made by China to the Western Powers for aid against her warlike and exacting neighbour. In those days a working agreement was much more readily made, at least among some nations. Several Powers with their finger in the Chinese pie warned Japan to reduce her claims, and in the end she had to be satisfied with little more than the money indemnity, with which, however, she could develop her commerce and military resources. Her intention to gain a firm footing on the Asiatic mainland was by no means abandoned, but merely postponed to a more favourable opportunity.

This came within the next ten years, in the form of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. The Nippon islanders had viewed with extreme disapproval the far-flung advance even of a distant European Power over the very parts of Eastern Asia that they themselves had marked for their own. And though, as victors, they apparently had very little to show in the peace treaty this time, they unmistakably made one more step in the plan so steadily carried out, before and since. The Korean peninsula, from which China had been previously ousted, was now to become definitely a Japanese possession. In its turn Manchuria was cleared of the rivals of the moment, the Russians, and Japan gained control of the railway in South Manchuria, which has more recently been the jumping-off ground for much more ambitious military operations.

The triumph this time was not by any means so easy as against defenceless China a decade earlier, though Japan

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had again been able to carry on the campaign with enormous advantages in her favour. The Russo-Japanese War is sometimes casually referred to as the first example of the defeat of a modern Western Power by an Asiatic nation. As a matter of fact, this war is one of the examples of Japan's never having really had to face a Western Power. Russia herself could be regarded as being largely an Oriental country, Westernized only to some extent in her Government's external relations with the nations of Europe. Her policy and commitments in the West required her to keep her first-line troops at home, and the forces sent to far Manchuria were reservists and other supplementary units recruited in Siberia. Nor was the war regularly and vigorously conducted from St Petersburg; it was looked upon merely as a minor campaign on a distant frontier. The inefficiency and corruption of the Russian staff were only characteristic of the internal weakness which was shortly to bring about the downfall of the Imperial Government.

Though thus abandoned by their own higher command, and suffering, moreover, from the terrible disadvantages of such long-drawn-out lines of communication right across two continents, the unlucky Russian officers and men in Manchuria rendered a good account of themselves, and exacted a heavy toll from the Japanese, whose military tactics included advancing to be slaughtered, in their efforts to drive home an attack by sheer weight of numbers. And in the most critical engagements the issue was often uncertain. More than once the forces of Nippon were left in possession of the field simply because they had hung on in desperation rather than withdraw the remnants of their armies. Though the scale of operations and the total

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numbers of troops involved were infinitely smaller than in European warfare, Japan was threatened with exhaustion, both of material resources and of man-power. Her patient soldiers suffered terribly, not only in the numbers killed and wounded, but also from the failure of the Army medical organization to cope with so many troops in the field and to prevent outbreaks of disease. The rigours of the Manchurian winter, vastly different from anything they had known in their own islands, which are alternately tropical and merely bleak, added to their untold hardships. Even the lowly population at home was becoming restless, and the authorities were exceedingly anxious, when the issue was suddenly decided in their favour. The ill-starred Russian Baltic Fleet, sent out as a desperate resort, crept unwillingly half-way round the world, and arrived, in the condition one might expect after such poor preparation and such a long voyage, to meet its inevitable fate at the hands of the eager Japanese admirals who were awaiting it at their own front door. How much of Nippon's success in this war was due to foreign assistance may never be known. She had, of course, previously taken the precaution of making an alliance with Great Britain, where the popular notion of the "gallant little Japs" was to survive for many a long day in the minds of those who like their ideas to be comfortably remote in time and space. But history has not yet seen fit to divulge just how much unofficial aid was secretly given from this side of the world.

It is well known that in 1914 the Japanese admirers of Prussian methods would have preferred to declare themselves on the side of Germany, in whom they had the greatest confidence as potential victors in the coming struggle. In

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the end, however, it was thought more prudent to join the Allies, as one of whom Japan then played a subsidiary but highly profitable *rôle*, both during the War and at the Peace Conference. One of her first acts was to attack Tsingtao, a German outpost in Chinese territory, on the coast of the Yellow Sea. She therefore found herself in the position of an opponent to the very army with which her own had hoped to be allied. It was the second time that Japanese forces had been in conflict with detachments of European troops far from any home base. The little garrison of four thousand Germans was completely cut off from any hope of aid, but even then several months elapsed before the Japanese captured the place.

Very cleverly choosing the moment when European nations were much too busy to bother with any intervention in Asiatic affairs, Japan in 1915 thrust upon China the famous Twenty-one Demands, to further her plan for getting a grip on the mainland. For the rest, her main part in the World War was the reaping of huge profits by supplying the Allies with much-needed materials, though of notoriously variable quality. Japanese business men had an idea that this Golden Age was to go on for ever; even years later many of them argued that the War should not have stopped when it did. In view of these huge profits and her absence of War debts, the financial difficulties of Japan since then must be ascribed to very curious economics within her own boundaries.

As one of the World Allies, with her navy intact though untried, Japan was able to play a flatteringly important *rôle* at the Versailles Conference. Taking her place with the victorious Western Powers was exceedingly agreeable to her pride. Her material share of the fruits of victory was

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at that time given little attention by nations so engrossed in European affairs, but it was a vital part of her own plans in the Far East. The Pacific islands confiscated from the enemy were mandated to Japan. A glance at a map<sup>1</sup> will show their strategic value. Though appearing so small and scattered, the Marshall, Caroline, and other groups are links in the chain extending from Japanese waters right into the tropics. This line completely cuts off the Philippine Islands, which, even during occupation by the United States, were considered an easy prey to a naval attack. With the retirement of American influence, however, the Philippines will naturally become a highly desirable field for Japanese penetration.

The usual mystery hangs over the Pacific islands mandated to Japan. While her publicists are seeking to deny charges that these outposts are being fortified, the authorities take every precaution to hide what is actually going on. The natives are compelled to silence; any stray European visitors are most carefully watched. But the fact remains that Japan now has a very convenient line of islands running from her own coasts to the East Indies. It is meant to serve as a protective screen against possible attack from the Pacific, and behind this screen Japan feels just a little safer to carry on her plans in Asia.

The world had an unmistakably open reminder of those plans during the unsettled period following the Great War. In 1919 an Allied force was sent into Siberia to rescue some Bohemian troops who had deserted to the Russians on the eastern Austrian Front, and had been trying to make their way across Siberia, in order to be shipped round the world and take the field again on the Allied side. While they

<sup>1</sup> See p. 8.

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were still on the way the War had ended, the Versailles Treaty had changed these Bohemians into Czechoslovaks whether they knew it or not, and the wanderers themselves were lost in an unfriendly Bolshevik country: The Allied rescuing force which set off from Vladivostok was supposed to consist of a few thousand men from each country taking part, America, Britain, Italy, and others. It is true that Japanese arithmetic differs from that of the rest of the world; it reckons large numbers in ten thousands, instead of thousands. But, from whatever reason, the Japanese contingent was out of all proportion to the others, and, what is more, its commanders showed no inclination to withdraw when the object of the expedition had been achieved with the rescue of the Czechoslovaks. And again it needed a strong hint from her allies before Japan relinquished her cherished desire to remain in occupation of Eastern Siberia.

Since then she has been chagrined to see that ambition becoming less and less likely of fulfilment. The growing internal strength of the new Russia, though as yet undetermined and offering no active threat to Japan, is nevertheless an effective check on any intentions she may have of penetrating Asia in that direction.

Meanwhile the rest of the world is coming to suspect Japan as a very active centre of disturbance. It is true that European countries are no perfect patterns of peace and concord. With so many of them packed into so small a space, they clash with each other like pebbles in a can. By contrast, Japan's position might be regarded as safe and tranquil. So long as there is no provocation on her own part there is little danger of her being attacked. Soviet Russia is likely to be far too busy with her own affairs for some time to come. Poor China, if we can speak of such

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a disunited people as a nation, is far too weak even to defend herself. On the other side the Pacific lies as a vast barrier, and the United States, also much preoccupied with her own internal affairs, has never been inclined to undertake expansion in Asia. It may well be asked, therefore, why Japan cannot go on quietly enjoying the advantages of her own position, as the most modernized Asiatic nation, and most favourably placed for trade between two continents.

In this respect, as in others, however, the country suffers from an unlucky fate, which seems to cause all assets to be offset by serious drawbacks. Both the safety and the positive advantages of her geographical position are jeopardized by her more than abnormal share of the human propensity for going and looking for trouble. In spite of the prodigious efforts of the Japanese to put on an appearance of amiability, they show a veritable genius for antagonizing even those who are most friendly disposed, both at home and abroad. Hackneyed phrases of peace and goodwill, uttered in Japan even more lavishly than elsewhere, are only a pathetic attempt to gloss over the disagreeable but undeniable fact, most familiar to those who know the Japanese best, that these islanders have succeeded in making themselves thoroughly disliked and universally mistrusted, not only by other nationalities in the Far East, but also by those with whom they come into contact all over the world.

It is no idle prejudice, as I have already shown, to say that the very presence of a Japanese is apt to cause an atmosphere of uneasiness. It is remarkable that even in a school of youngsters of different nationalities who get on well with each other in the usual free-and-easy manner

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a Japanese boy remains aloof, unable to forget his dignity. If in time he does manage to rid himself of this awkwardness he becomes just as jolly and friendly as the rest. But if ever he returns to people of his own race he will have to forget all that foreign nonsense, and learn again to comport himself in a manner befitting a citizen of so great a nation.

Such international attitudes have been summed up as follows: one Japanese, a smile; two Japanese, a consultation; three Japanese, "a delegation from Tokyo to investigate the possibilities of secret penetration on behalf of the national interests." This process is largely responsible for the meagre welcome so often accorded to Japanese settlers. It was one of the reasons behind the outcry against them in California. The Chinese there were cheap competitors, it was true, but at least they were content to carry on as workers, while the Japanese are for ever trying to get a controlling finger in the pie. They have been very successful in Shanghai; they continue the process wherever possible.

In their customary aggrieved pose before the world, lamenting their sad fate in being shut out from everywhere, the Japanese conveniently lose sight of some facts. If all the countries in the world threw open their doors to the Japanese alone, admitting them in numbers equal to the total of immigrants from all sources at normal times, even this would absorb only a part of Nippon's teeming surplus.

In view of Japan's age-long isolation, so recently broken, it is just a little curious to hear her nationalists quoting from Western text-books, and demanding in stereotyped fashion the right to expansion, for sources of raw materials, markets for manufactured goods, and an outlet for surplus population. And it is instructive to examine these factors



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in the light of actual conditions in Japan and the territories she has so far absorbed.

As we have seen, the islands of Nippon suffer from severe limitation in both the quantity and the quality of coal, iron, and other raw materials necessary for industry and domestic use. At the same time it is evident that in this mountainous country the area of rice-growing land cannot be increased. But the idea of getting the population to fit the country and its resources would seem especially disagreeable to those who think in terms of vast quantities of cheap labour at all times, and troops for war. So far from expansion abroad, however, the Japanese could well learn to live in their own country. But one can hardly imagine them taking a lesson from people such as the Swiss, who live in a country of very limited resources, and who therefore have a limited population, specializing in producing goods of high quality. In Japan at least the potential manual skill is there, but goods of high quality are not the standard. Even when purchasing from abroad Japanese business men are apt to prefer articles which appear to be cheaper, however much less suitable and durable. And at home they have not the idea of paying higher wages to a smaller number of well-skilled workers. There is a preference for a cheap and swarming population, whose renowned activity, moreover, is often a jerky restlessness rather than steadily applied energy.

While clamouring for outlets abroad the Japanese have not yet filled up the land they possess. The north island, Hokkaido, is too cold; Formosa, on the other hand, is too hot, and cheap native competition is too strong. This latter drawback is quoted against Korea. Objections are found against every new bit of territory added to the

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Empire. In Manchuria they appear in a new grouping: cold climate and native competition.

In Manchuria too the Japanese are dogged by their usual unkind fate, that any advantage accruing is offset by a corresponding drawback. While there is no doubt of the territory's value as a source of certain raw materials, notably coal and iron, as well as soya-beans and other foodstuffs, it is no boundless treasury of wealth. Especially with coal and iron, both quantity and quality appear very meagre compared with Western standards.

### 3. IN MANCHURIA

Whether one approaches Manchuria by the railway through Korea or by landing at the port of Dairen, at the southern end of the Liao-tung peninsula, near the old Port Arthur, the impression is much the same. We are evidently on Japanese-controlled territory, but, as is often the case in a nation's oversea possessions, things seem less involved; they look clearer-cut than in the home country. The Manchurian Railway is very much the centre of things; it is the line by which the country is being developed, the outlet for its products, and a highly important strategic communication as well. It has a military look about it, with the stations and sidings so neatly laid out, so smoothly run by the smart-looking officials in uniform. The fact that the tracks are full width, instead of the narrow gauge, as in Japan itself, adds to the impression of roominess, and most certainly to comfort in travel. At various depots there is ample provision of supplementary tracks, which could be used equally well for dealing with the soya-bean crop or the handling of troops, as on the duplicated

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strategic lines flanking frontiers in Europe. Only a few years ago, when Japan's interest in Manchuria was chiefly economic, little was seen of military occupation; just a sentry here and there, or a small detachment moving unobtrusively about.

The Japanese are very proud of the city of Dairen, which was formerly the Russian port of Dalny, with its imposing centre of large buildings and broad streets, and its harbour big enough to deal with what cargo steamers come thus far from main ocean routes. Dairen is at once the base for undertakings in Manchuria and the main outlet for its produce. If the visitor is in possession of official credentials or letters of introduction the Government functionaries are eager to impress him with their activities. And Dairen is certainly a good front window for their Manchurian undertakings. In the Products Museum, the Experimental Institute, and similar places they give a very clear and methodical idea of work going on. All this is an admirable preparation for a visit to the places themselves, in different parts of the country away north, and a further study of these well-arranged maps, scale models, specimens, diagrams, and other illustrations helps to clinch the knowledge gained among the agricultural and industrial regions themselves.

It goes almost without saying that we meet some of our former students, who have now obtained posts in the administrative and other offices in this newly developing country. And it is equally certain that they make it the occasion for a reunion, a little supper and a lot of chat about old times and present doings, for they themselves may not have met each other for some time. They are very thoughtful and helpful in showing their old teacher

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round wherever he wants to go. They will hand him on from place to place; wherever he stops he will find some of his former disciples, at Mukden, Fushun, Anshan, Penshihu, Hsinking, Harbin, and the rest. It does not matter if most of them have forgotten what foreign languages they ever learned, and must apologetically fall back on their own mother tongue. They are an interesting lot, young fellows like these in this young country. Very few of them have ever been home again to Japan since they crossed the sea. It is as if a new generation were growing up here. There is a lighter and brighter atmosphere. In the recreation grounds and clubs attached to some of the bigger offices young men and girls talk and play together, a strange contrast to life in old Japan. And amidst all this newness one looks round in vain for the ancient landmarks so familiar in Nippon: the Shinto shrines, the massive wooden temples among the thick green trees. Some of the old customs are kept up, but as time goes on the difference between Japan and this newer offshoot becomes more marked.

The Fushun colliery, some distance eastward from the main line, provides one of the most remarkable sights in the world. It is not a coal-mine so much as a coal-quarry. As we stand on its northern edge we look down into a huge open cut, where the process of coal-getting is going on in the full light of day. The steeply sloping sides are terraced for the rails and trucks which carry the coal to the sorting sheds, thence to be sent off mostly to Dairen and shipped to Japan. Immediately beneath our feet is a deep stratum of shale, a hundred and fifty feet thick, and of hardly less importance than the coal-measures. American-built steam diggers are scraping away the surface of the

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shale, ever deeper and deeper, and behind us are the works for extracting the fuel oil. As the shale is removed, at the rate of well over a million tons a year, more and more of the underlying coal seam is exposed. This stupendous mass of solid fuel is calculated at a thousand million tons; it slopes away down below the ground southward, and its upper edge crops out at various places for a distance of twenty miles. Small outcrops have been nibbled at for centuries, and the coal has been carried away through the mountains we can see to the south-east, into neighbouring Korea. But the Japanese occupiers of Manchuria cut into the main seam on the present extensive scale, at the same time utilizing the accompanying oil-shale. Unfortunately, the fuel ratios are generally low, and Manchuria is disappointing as far as a source of hard coal is concerned.

Similar limitations are noticeable in the iron-supplies being worked, for example at Anshan, on the west side of the main railway between Dairen and Mukden. The quality of the ore is such that even here, at the biggest ironworks in the country, special equipment has had to be installed, in order to extract as much as possible of the low proportion of metal, generally less than 40 per cent. It is also noticeable that while American furnaces and similar fittings are being introduced, some of the existing plant is allowed to fall into disrepair. At one place, for instance, we find the coking ovens out of action, and the process being regularly carried on by the old Chinese method in earthen kilns built up on the ground, with a consequent loss of all gases and other by-products.

So scanty are the mineral resources of Manchuria that we cannot picture the growth of industrial areas in the ordinary sense. We see a few chimneys near the railway

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here, and a little mining village among the mountains there, everything scattered and on a small scale. All these undertakings are, of course, supervised by Japanese officials, the rough and dirty work being done by Chinese workmen.

The economic importance of Manchuria is more likely to rest with its agriculture, which is naturally in the hands of the native Chinese peasants, aided and encouraged as far as possible by Japanese advisers. Apart from the climate and standard of living, this dry-land farming would hardly be suited to any immigrants from Japan, where rice-growing in flooded paddy-fields has always been practised, as it is in more southerly parts of China. The northern provinces have their typical landscapes, vast level stretches of ground planted with the tall bright green millet and maize, or the lower but broader-leafed soya-bean plants. The uses to which these beans are put resemble those of cotton-seed. Oil is extracted for various uses or the seeds are pressed into great round slabs, and exported for fodder or other purposes. In recent years there has been a growing trade in soya-beans sent to Europe, for the manufacture of butter substitutes and similar foodstuffs.

No matter how peaceful the prospect, as we look at the industrial spots in the hilly parts of South Manchuria, or the vast fertile plains farther north, we have an unsettled feeling as to what will happen next. In this critical corner of the world the question is not so much how things are at the moment as what they are going to be. The situation has all the makings of instability. Manchuria was formerly a Chinese province, typically so, loosely connected with the Government of Peking, and poorly developed. The South Manchurian Railway was primarily leased to Japan, and then only as far north as Changchun, from which

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point a section of the Chinese Eastern Railway linked up to Harbin. The same extraordinary sectionalization was seen on the line from Siberia, across Manchuria, and down to the coast at Vladivostok. The name Trans-Siberian Railway officially ended at Manchuli, on the frontier, from where it was known as the Chinese Eastern Railway, through Harbin and onward to the eastern border. As may be imagined, there has been endless friction among the Chinese, Russian, and Japanese authorities as to the control of the various sections. Other lines have been built or planned, intersecting or running parallel to existing systems, and adding to the general strategic tangle. And at what Japan considered a favourable moment she struck the next blow in her penetration of Eastern Asia.

The 'incident' which was supposed to lead to the actual outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China was the alleged murder of a Japanese officer—a pretext as plausible as those usually made by a nation ready and eager to pick a quarrel with a neighbour. And so there started a curious little war, typically Oriental, though Western weapons were used to a certain extent. The Japanese command proceeded to clear the country of Chinese soldiery, regular and irregular. The casual warriors known as bandits provided endless excuses for showing that China could not keep her own country and people in order, and that it was the mission of her neighbour to do it for her. But it is often hard to draw any line of demarcation separating bandits from Government troops, or soldiers from citizens. Peasants who have had their fields and homes devastated by robber bands see nothing better to do than join the marauders themselves. Soldiers who have long received no pay from the local war-lord, in the endless little rivalries which have

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devastated so many Chinese provinces, are forced to help themselves by plundering the countryside. These bands of brigands may be taken into the service of a Chinese general, who will also buy or talk over as many troops as possible from the armies opposing him. One hears less of this internal strife now. The land lies open and at the mercy of the invader, but still China cannot achieve unity.

Early in the Manchurian skirmishes a troop of bandits cut the railway between Changchun and Harbin. Some Europeans who were just then travelling north to get on to a main-line train for Trans-Siberia and Europe were obliged to turn back as far as a place called Ssuping-kai, where they changed on to a branch line trailing through Cheng-chia-tun and Tao-nan, to rejoin the main line at Tsitsihar. During the first part of this *détour* they were crowded by Japanese troops who were being transported somewhere or other. About half-way the Japanese disappeared, and soon the railway was crowded by Chinese troops. The travellers therefore concluded that they had passed right through the fighting zone and any front line that might exist.

Such a mild adventure is not at all strange to anyone acquainted with war as it is waged in the East. It was common during the little internal wars of China. When travelling on any railway that happened to be working, passengers might have to rechange their money into the local currency ordered by the war-lord who had just occupied the district. There would be no assurance or responsibility as to the arrival of the train, anywhere or any time. You and your fellow-passengers would set off with a perfect feeling of taking a chance. When the train eventually started, even later than usual, its progress was slow.



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As it bumped and rolled along through the night you dozed uncomfortably, sometimes waking up to find everything in silence and stillness. The train had stopped; you wondered how long ago, and, more still, how long before it would start again. Eventually it would resume its slow journey, stopping again at likely or unlikely places, for long or short intervals. Uniformed figures could be seen dimly here and there, either hurrying hither and thither or sauntering about as if with nothing special to do. Faces came near outside the carriage window, dusky, stolid, and glowering countenances, and disappeared. Now and then an engine whistle sounded faintly, there were sundry bangs and other noises. A terrific uproar of human voices suggested something out of the ordinary, but it was only a Chinese passenger without a travelling permit being interrogated by the armed guards on the train. Of these there was a mixed band, rank and file resplendent with a profusion of badges, and Sam Browne belts, the qualification for wearing which, among Chinese soldiery, is often nothing more than the ability to buy or otherwise acquire them. And so on through the weary night, moving and stopping, till with daylight you woke up to find that you were a bit nearer to your destination, and the landscape gave no sign of harbouring a war.

### 4. AN ORIENTAL WAR

After years of living in the East we thought we had seen the limits of the bizarre and the unexpected, but Japan in war-time was again something beyond the wildest imagination. To anyone whose previous view of military activities has been on the front of a mere European war,

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living on an Oriental home front is a weird and wonderful experience. As I read over my notes of things seen and heard at that time I still find it hard to believe that they could ever really have happened.

The Japanese were most insistent in telling the world that this was not a war, that they had not the slightest intention of making war, that no one was to speak of a war, but just a little justifiable pacification. But among themselves the one great topic of conversation was this glorious war, with its splendid victories and stirring prospects. Hard times were forgotten, as the authorities meant them to be, in a wave of patriotic emotion. The more enthusiastic even forgot to keep up the mask of smiling affability worn before foreigners. They would strut up to their foreign acquaintances with unconcealed delight: "You see, we have defeated China, and next it will be your turn, in America, England, and the rest."

In contrast to the cautious moving of troops in Europe during war-time, trainloads of Japanese conscripts were drafted about the country on their way to the port of embarkation, to be shown off as much as possible. At every town and village on the way large numbers of the population, under the auspices of various patriotic societies, together with crowds of school-children and college students, police, reservists, firemen, and others, were ordered out to give the conscripts a martial send-off. Not only at the stations, but for miles in both directions the railways were lined with people waving paper flags and cheering, not in short bursts as we do, but with a prolonged "A-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ah!" The men themselves looked pleasantly thrilled, but some of them gave vent to their feelings, with loud lamentations and streaming tears.

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As I was observed to be taking photos of these stirring scenes I was directed to submit them for scrutiny by the police, so that no vital military secrets might leak out to the enemy. They were quite satisfied with the views of cheering crowds, and carriage windows packed with smiling faces. I was even asked to write up my impressions for the papers, which I did with all due tact.

However careful the censorship on private photographs a thousand miles from the scene of military operations, the country was soon flooded with official war news and pictures, the like of which was surely never heard or seen before or since. Microphones were installed at the Front, so that people at home could listen in to the commentators, as if at a big sports meeting. It was just a little surprising to see Press reporters and camera-men fussing about importantly right up the Line, wearing distinguishing badges on their mufti, and carrying pistols for defence against illegally armed Chinese civilians. To enhance the importance and secrecy of operations reports usually announced that "on a certain day at a certain hour a certain number of troops from certain divisions under Generals X, Y, and Z left a certain place to carry out certain movements against certain enemy forces under General A."

Although a great deal of the Japanese military equipment had to be bought from abroad, the war films usually started with a display of these aeroplanes, tanks, and other modern contrivances, as the emblems of Nippon's martial might, and with more than a hint that they were also the product of the nation's inventive genius. There was a great deal of ceremonial, Prussianesque salutes together with the stiff Japanese bow from the hips. Back at headquarters sentries posed grimly with swords or bayonets

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pointed bravely at a hypothetical enemy, perhaps the world in general, but no one in particular. Staff officers stood in the open and peered solemnly at nothing through trench periscopes, over miles and miles of flat country. They grouped themselves round maps and in consultations, or attentively followed their commander's finger, pointing at some imaginary problem just beyond the horizon.

Troops in the field gaze nonchalantly at aircraft overhead. Dusky faces are less visible than white, and in any case there is little or no enemy aircraft to be expected. The only precaution necessary, whether in position or on the march, is to spread huge national flags of the Rising Sun, to show that they belong to the same side as the aviators flying comfortably and triumphantly above.

The films also showed the Nipponese marching to victory, and Chinese scurrying away in disorder. And if the next scene happened to show a number of pigs scuttling away, that must be taken as simply a coincidence, and only the most evilly disposed would see in it a sneering comment on the luckless enemy.

Officers and soldiers go into action wearing white gloves, just as workmen do back home in Japan. Their steel helmets are polished and shining, and are often perched so high on a mass of woollen wrappings, worn on account of the bitter cold, that they are no longer any protection for anything but these woollen wrappings. In the films men are shown advancing to the attack, grimacing fiercely in the manner of old-time warriors, waving banners, and brandishing swords. It has been seriously proposed to equip the Japanese Army with the traditional two-handed sword—which might be as useful as anything, in the Asiatic fighting it is called upon to undertake.

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In such curious conditions of Oriental warfare it is sometimes difficult to distinguish which films are meant to depict actual incidents and which are dramatic versions. They may at least be supposed to have entered the realm of fiction when wire entanglements show not a single barb, while bullets are obligingly luminous, and throw off sparks as they hit the ground.

When anything happens worth calling a battle, cinema films of it are shown all over Japan within a few days. Certain details are seized upon to catch the public fancy, and romanticized out of all proportion to the real incidents. Such was the story with the extraordinary title of *The Three Human Meat-bombs*. This told how three Japanese soldiers tied some explosive to a length of bamboo, and crept forward with this primitive contrivance, to blow a gap in the enemy's wire defences, involving themselves in the destruction. Imaginative pictures of the incident were shown by the score, on the screen, in newspapers and magazines. The theme was worked up in all sorts of ways. Small boys were seen dramatizing it everywhere, advancing stealthily in groups of threes, complete with length of bamboo. A song was written and taught in the schools. Pictures showed tiny infants singing to order the gory song of *The Three Human Meat-bombs*.

The Navy saw with envious eyes so much publicity being given to its bitter rival, the Army. At the best of times the fleet is regarded as something rather new and strange in the life of the nation, a force working in the background, and it can never attain the traditional and popular acclamation enjoyed by the soldiers. And so, to offset military exploits in Manchuria, the admirals took care to distribute film pictures of their warships at Shanghai,

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their bombardment spreading death and destruction among the Chinese civilian population, without even the pretext of any strategic advantage to be gained.

Things generally on the home front in Japan itself were the usual strange mixture of ancient native customs and modern imitations from abroad. At street-corners mothers, wives, and sisters stood holding cloth belts, into which passing women were asked to stitch little circles of crimson thread. A thousand of these marks were supposed to make the belt into a magic charm, to protect a son, husband, or brother at the Front. Several relatives killed themselves to encourage their fighting-men, and, like the frequent suicide epidemics even in ordinary times, the practice quickly spread.

One day I was puzzled at seeing a big youth being wheeled along in a handcart and dropping large round stones here and there on the road. When he paused from time to time and twirled a tiny wooden propeller in the breeze I realized what he was doing—bombing the despicable Chinese. Toy aeroplanes and tin helmets became the symbol of the hour. Baby boys were made to masquerade as rabid militarists. Official price-lists were published, showing the cost of military supplies, from gas-masks and ambulance stretchers to armoured cars and bombing 'planes, so that super-patriots might supplement the Army's equipment, which looks meagre enough at the best of times, though, of course, it is immeasurably superior to the contemptible enemy's accoutrements.

Casualties are relatively few in an Asiatic campaign. The national custom of cremation was observed for soldiers who were killed or who died on active service, and the ashes were sent back to the individual homes. We

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often saw the little procession of priests, slowly and solemnly carrying along the white-covered boxes containing the urns, while crowds with bowed heads lined the streets. More and more frequently both school-children and adults were ordered to the stations, to send off more troops or welcome those returning. Some of these real heroes had a tale to tell far different from the glorious glamour officially spread over everything. It was true that the Chinese troops, so poorly equipped and with such uncertain support from their own unsettled, divided leaders, were no match for the Japanese, so strictly controlled by their autocratic commanders. But the opposition was appreciably stiffening. The Chinese had already shown that even against great odds they could make it a much less one-sided affair than their foes expected. And, apart from actual fighting, the Nipponese islanders had found a terrible enemy in the Manchurian winter. Whatever may be said of the schemes of the military leaders, their humble conscripts merit the deepest admiration and sympathy for their patient endurance.

Such pious humanitarianism would receive less than no approval from the powers that be. When some of the returned heroes tried to tell the folks at home how things really were in this glorious war they were literally beaten into silence by the patriotic associations and other intimidating agencies officially let loose on them. The authorities seized the opportunity at this time of national excitement and launched another campaign of persecution against some more unlucky thousands accused of 'dangerous thought.' Patriotism was made the excuse for a long series of political assassinations. Many a hot-headed fanatic who regarded himself as the elect saviour of the

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nation made a bid for publicity by an attempt on the life of some public man. Mr Hamaguchi, Baron Inoue, and Baron Dan went down one after the other, a serious loss to the steadier and more peaceful side of national life.

One of the most pathetic victims of military autocracy was Dr Nitobe, a liberal statesman in the best sense of the word. He was well known as the first Assistant Secretary at the foundation of the League of Nations at Geneva, and he was highly esteemed in international circles for his deep knowledge and broad outlook in world affairs. At the same time he was intensely and admirably patriotic towards his own beloved Japan. But a number of Army officers chose to resent some remark, which they considered derogatory, in a speech by Dr Nitobe in Tokyo. They went to his house, ordered him from a sick bed, and compelled him to apologize. Knowing that his persecutors would not leave him in peace even then, the old man took refuge in the United States, where he made strenuous efforts to combat the growing feeling of antipathy against Japan. Broken in health he died in exile, and his ashes were returned to his native land.

A particularly foul crime, which shocked even those who knew Japan best, and which sorely tried their faith in the nation, was the murder of Mr Inukai. In spite of his advanced age, this grand old man had accepted the heavy responsibilities of the Premiership at a very critical time, and was doing his best to steer a safe course for the nation through its frenzied disorder. His attempt at moderation brought down upon him the wrath of the military party; a gang of young men burst into his house, and shot the gallant old gentleman in cold blood. In contrast to the savage punishment handed out to the ordinary political



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offenders, these wild young jingoists were dealt with very leniently. It was announced that they had been severely lectured, and brought to realize that their patriotism had been too fervently applied. Small wonder, then, that another wholesale slaughter of statesmen has still more recently put the Japanese military gangsters on the front page of the world's news—where they so much desire to be.

War-time naturally gave exceptional activity to the patriotic associations, the local and national organizations officially promoted, as we have seen, to keep young men in touch with the Army. More and more frequently we saw them parading in their khaki uniforms of rough cotton, with their rifles, packs, and other equipment, kept in the local armoury to turn them into troops at any moment. On field-days they could be seen, just like the schoolboy troops, moving about among the rice-fields, firing off thousands of percussion caps, advancing to the attack with warlike yells, and limping home in their rubber shoes, straw sandals, or other nondescript footgear, tired and footsore after so much unwonted pedestrian exercise.

The idea of war can be thrilling to those who have never known its reality. It is pleasantly exciting for people to sit back and hear of their own army's sweeping victories, against an enemy that is much too weak and distant to bring home the meaning of war to the islanders in their safety. Up to the present, at least, Japan itself has been completely immune from any form of attack. But the military authorities see fit to carry on a kind of air-defence practice, to give the nation a little further pleasurable excitement, to impress it with the measures being taken for its welfare, and to remind it of its duty to do as it is told.

## *A MIMIC OF WAR*

These mimic air-raids would be a mere curiosity if they were not so tragic, both in the manner of their execution and in the sinister possibilities they suggest.

Elaborate instructions are given as to the behaviour of the populace when notice of air-raid practice is given. Even at the first warning siren the lights flicker, as the men at the switches fuss about, anxious to show everybody what a powerful control they hold over the destinies of the moment. Guns bang and machine-guns rattle. Soldiers with fixed bayonets patrol the streets on horses and bicycles—what use they would be in case of emergency it is hard to imagine. And in contrast to the "Take cover!" warning so well known in countries that have suffered from air attack, in Japan the streets are crowded with people and children, all staring at nothing in particular up in the moon-lit sky, and cheering most enthusiastically. They cannot be expected to know what all this really means, and it would be no use for anyone to try to explain it to them. They take it for granted that it is the *rôle* of their invincible forces to devastate the enemy's country, and they cannot visualize the same fate ever happening to their own. And for their own sake one can only hope that they may never have reason to be rudely disturbed from this blissful ignorance. What would happen in a single air-raid on a Japanese town, with its wood-and-paper buildings all ready for a sweeping conflagration, its jumpy inhabitants doomed in uncontrollable panic, is too frightful to think of.

The celebration of victories, welcomes and farewells to the troops, and other national occasions give ample scope for the military to show its power over the docile citizens. Year by year I had always attended the ordinary national ceremonies, which have a simple and charming dignity,

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and my Japanese colleagues were pleased at a foreigner's taking such an admiring interest in them. But during the endless succession of military occasions later on they hinted that it was "not necessary for a foreign gentleman to be present." They did not at all relish the outsider's seeing so much behind the scenes, observing the complete domination of the khaki tyrants over the hapless civilians. Once when I was impressed by the stately melody of an old national song, and I asked for a copy of it, I was told that its words were much too sacred to be offered for translation into any foreign tongue. And as the national ceremonies were regarded as being so solemn, hats and coats could not be worn, even out in the open under falling snow. On a high wooden platform an Army officer presided over the gathering of children and adults. He rapped out sharp orders: "Towards the City Hall—bow!" and down they all went. "Up again! Left turn! Towards the Isozumi Shrine—bow!" and down again went the obedient heads and bodies. At other times they could talk volubly of themselves as a mighty nation, and seek to outdo each other in expressions of patriotism. But the yoke was on their necks, whether they knew it or not, and there it remains.

It must not be supposed, however, that even this enforced jingoism is by any means universal. As in any other country, there are great numbers of quiet, steady people who have no active interest in such things. They may have to obey orders and join in the official rejoicings, but for the most part they wish to live their own lives, and some of them think that this tolerant idea might well be extended internationally. Sometimes they talk things over, but not often, and not very far. As in other countries

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ruled by an arbitrary faction, the word of peaceful citizens counts for less than nothing, and besides, they never know what spies may be about, to carry the most innocent remarks to official ears.

### 5. OUTLOOK UNSETTLED

However autocratic the national leaders may be in their dealings with submissive civilians at home, or against any opposition in China, hitherto so feeble, and whatever dreams they may have of extended dominion, they themselves cannot escape from the limitations imposed upon them by circumstances. Of these the most serious are the internal weaknesses of their own country, the complications involved by adventures on the Asiatic mainland, and the constant risks of frustration by stronger Powers.

Military undertakings have already thrown a heavy burden on Japan's economic resources, which show signs of considerable strain. It is true that the low standard of living among the population in general and the artificially depressed value of the *yen* give some advantage in the nation's foreign trade, but this offers a temporary and partial appearance of prosperity rather than any fundamental stability. The nation's finance is a puzzle to independent experts, who wonder by what miracle it has struggled thus far. Up to 50 per cent. of the total national expenditure goes to satisfying the demands of the Army and Navy alone. Year after year an artificial balance is created by means of paper loans, as further taxation is considered impracticable, and internal expenses are cut down as low as possible. Most of these loans have to be taken up by Japanese firms, as foreign investors are not attracted by

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such curious national finance. No doubt the two or three huge business concerns which control the nation's economic life hope to reap the fruits of the military adventures in occupied territories, but whether these fruits will be sufficiently valuable, and whether the Japanese invaders will ever be allowed to enjoy them in peace, are two very doubtful questions.

The wealth of the Orient is a conception still lingering in the minds of many people who have never had reason to examine the supposition more closely. It is a relic of the days of the earliest European travellers, who brought back tales of royal splendour, either real or reported, pictures of sumptuous palaces and golden temples, leading to a popular but very mistaken inference as to general conditions in the far-off countries concerned. In much more recent times, for the matter of that, casual visitors to post-War Europe have been misled by the sight of luxury in the great cities, and have actually refused to believe the existence of the much less pleasant reality beneath.

According to modern economic standards, the Orient does not by any means appear as a realm of unbounded wealth. With the exception of antimony and tungsten from China, the whole of the Far East does not at present yield more than 1 per cent. of any mineral used in industry.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the resources of China itself are an entirely uncertain quantity. Statistics show a very wide fluctuation in the estimates of mineral potentialities. In Szechuan Province, for example, different geological engineers of ample experience have calculated the coal deposits as high as eighty thousand million tons, and as low as one and a half millions.

<sup>1</sup> Tin of Malay not included.

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Japanese industrial concerns, like those of other countries, have long held considerable interests in China, notably the cotton-mills round Shanghai and ironworks in the Yangtse valley. These commercial activities have frequently been interrupted when the Chinese have become more than usually exasperated by the encroachments of their more enterprising neighbours. And while the Japanese are anxious to push markets for their goods in China, they show themselves talented in antagonizing the very people whom they regard as prospective customers.

There can be no doubt that their territorial occupation and other advances on the Asiatic continent have been looked upon as a means for establishing commercial monopolies and other economic advantages. At the same time commitments in man-power and other liabilities have increased with every advance into territories on the mainland. Though Chinese resistance has been weak, the position of the invaders is never an enviable one. At times it almost seems that further vast areas are to slip unresistingly into the conqueror's hands, that the nation's nominal leaders are yielding to the demands of the foreign dictators. But a point is reached when a halt is called.

Even apart from material considerations, the intrusion of the newly and hurriedly modernized Japanese into the vast provinces of ancient China seems particularly incongruous, and it is likely to meet the ultimate fate which is natural. At times China appears disunited, crippled, and defenceless, but history shows many things stranger than the slow upward and strengthening movement which is possible here. Vast old countries have more than once shown themselves capable of exerting their own methods of attenuation and exhaustion upon an enemy.

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No such remote considerations are likely to concern the minds of triumphant but still unsatisfied Nipponese generals: but obstacles are likely to be raised by more immediate factors, not only the stiffening of Chinese resistance, but the ever-present danger of a clash with other nations. Japan's Army leaders have never ceased to entertain the idea of occupying at least the regions east of Lake Baikal; their advances from north China through Mongolia are aimed at the Trans-Siberian Railway, and there is constant friction on the frontier between the new province called Manchukuo and adjacent Russian territory. As we have seen, the Russian authorities have concerned themselves with building up internal strength rather than with military excursions outside their own extensive borders. The many 'incidents' with Nipponese troops have usually dissolved in a flood of Oriental eloquence and compromise; but no one knows how hard the Russians could hit their restless little neighbour in the Far East.

On Japan's ocean frontier the prospect is equally ominous. Though the United States is not in the least likely to initiate any attack on Asiatic shores, the presence of her warships and aircraft-carriers far and wide in the Pacific is a cause of ceaseless uneasiness in Tokyo. Moreover, the Americans are in possession of the Aleutian Islands, a line of bleak and barren rocks away north, forming a link between Alaska and Kamchatka, across the Pacific at its narrowest part, and offering enough accommodation for advanced aerial bases.

In the most modern form of military operations, therefore, Japan finds herself at a great disadvantage. For reasons we have already seen, physiological and otherwise, her aviators are not fitted for distinction in the air. Further,

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with the exception of China, there are no great centres of population in potentially enemy countries within striking distance of aircraft from Japan. At the same time, from Vladivostok on the one hand, and from American units on the other, aerial attacks could be carried out on Tokyo, Osaka, and other densely peopled cities, where the peculiar construction of the buildings and the psychology of the inhabitants would ensure the maximum of frightful effect.

Though the Japanese leaders are usually cautious in pushing their adventures just far enough to avoid incurring open military reprisals, the antagonism which they constantly arouse on all sides often brings down upon them certain penalties, unobtrusively but effectively applied by exasperated foreigners. Nobody was deceived by the talk of independence in the puppet state of Manchukuo, or by the declared policy of the Open Door for trade. In effect the territory was for a Japanese monopoly, and the Open Door was for one way only—the few foreign concerns previously established there finding themselves squeezed out. This policy, of course, goes hand in hand with the process of occupying or otherwise controlling further territories. At various times, however, there have been a number of small incidents, hardly recorded, even unnoticed except by those who can recognize their inner significance, which is considerable.

At the moment of their greatest triumph, when they had finished their easy conquest of Manchuria, the Japanese generals were naturally proposing to carry out their long-cherished plan of sweeping into North China itself. But a foreign ambassador was instructed to give Tokyo a gentle hint that this line of advance would fall foul of certain European industrial concerns on the spot, and so the march



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on Tientsin was suddenly suspended. Later on the Nipponese movements against Peking met with a similar obstacle. Detachments of troops from two Western legations were discovered most unaccountably situated east of the city, and the advance was again abandoned, to avoid international unpleasantness.

It must not be for a moment suggested that matters in China should be left to the rivalries of private business interests or of individual nations. The question is much wider than that. It must be confessed that the record of European encroachments in China forms no inspiring chapter of history, but at least in more recent times there has been a tendency to let her alone. It is realized that much of her trouble is caused by her own internal disorder, but that she should be given a chance to work out her own destiny in her own slow-moving and devious ways. To comment upon the interfering policy so actively pursued by her nearest neighbour, therefore, need not be taken as a sign of prejudice or partiality.

This policy of penetration follows very well-marked lines. It is going on unceasingly even while nothing is heard of it, for headlines and other means of publicity break out only when something big has happened. Even in events more publicly known there is a uniformity about Japanese procedure in China. An incident is made the grounds of further demands, which are pushed as far as ever possible. Officials obnoxious to Japan must be removed; nominees of Japan must be appointed; and before the world is well aware of it further territories and activities have come under Nippon's sway.

Foreign opposition or remonstrance is the most galling thing that can happen. The truth is that the Japanese

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would very much like to see all Western influence cleared out, not only of China, but also of Asia. At the same time that they are marching as conquerors they are claiming the rôle of leaders and protectors of all Oriental countries against European aggression. The situation was not without its humour when Japan, as champion of the coloured races, saw fit to denounce Italy for carrying on a campaign very similar to her own. It must be noted, however, that this gesture was largely intended as a means to get on the front page of the news. The pride and national outlook of the Japanese are such that they cannot bear to be out of the public eye. To be the subject of world-wide execration and ostracism is a pleasure to them; it strengthens their attitude as an isolated and misunderstood nation; but to be ignored altogether is unbearable. One of their bitterest moments was when their Manchurian campaign was swept off the world's news pages by the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby in America.

There is no doubt that many people on the Western side of the world, especially those who only hear occasionally of what are considered as the big events of the East, are ready to agree that Europeans should clear out of China, out of Asia in general, to leave those distant countries completely alone, so that they may settle their quarrels and destinies as they please. It is no idle tag to repeat that the question is bigger than that. It is no sentimental *cliché* to say that world-wide interdependence is by now too close for any such off-handed apathy.

If proof of this be needed, even in only one respect, it is most strikingly given in what happened in 1931 and what has resulted since. At that time the Western Powers did not see fit to take steps in what could be shelved as

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a remote consideration on the other side of the world. Though they may not have noticed it at the time, they let slip the chance of making a decisive move towards a more desirable method of settling international affairs. For those acquainted with the circumstances it is safe to say that positive action would have proved unnecessary. In such a case a hint, if firm and unanimous, is sufficient. No one supposes that the whole problem would have been solved; the way would still have been long and difficult, but at least a step would have been made. But it was missed, and then, sure enough, what was thought to be a merely Oriental affair had its repercussions in the West. National gangsterism was encouraged, as it saw little risk of being checked by any general action in favour of law and order. When a concerted effort was at last made against an individual European aggressor the task was more arduous. Once again the conqueror's victory appeared complete, and other autocrats with similar designs were further encouraged. The ultimate success or failure of collective action, international co-operation, or whatever it may be called, will obviously have untold effects on events and developments all over the world. What these are to be in the Far East will no doubt make a highly interesting though unquiet page of future history.

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